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A QUARTERLY FOR THE INDEPENDENT THINKER

Winter • 1950-51

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THE AMERICAN SCHOLAR

VOLUME 20 *Winter 1950-51* NUMBER 1

The Scholar in a Time of Peril

ELMER DAVIS

IT MAY SEEM impertinent for a layman, what Masons call a profane, to venture to offer suggestions as to what scholars might usefully do in a time of peril or any other time. But it seems to me that such suggestions have some relevance. In the first place, the scholar is in these times increasingly dependent on the understanding and support of the general public, in an age when taxation is cutting down the great private endowments by which scholarship used to be sustained; and beyond that the general public, the general welfare, needs the contribution which only the scholar and the intellectual can provide. I do not insist that these two groups are necessarily identical, or that either scholarship or intellectuality necessarily connotes intelligence. Yet it seems probable that there is a considerable degree of overlapping in these three categories—enough of it so that it is possible to discuss the intellectual and the scholarly world (the kind of people who used to be called clerks in the Middle Ages) as a segment of the population which, on the whole, not only knows something, but has some idea of what to do with what it knows. If that proposition is not generally valid, I do not know why we go to the trouble and expense of maintaining universities.

And the particular contributions of scholarship, it seems to me, are two. First, the scholar knows what has been done, what has been tried, in the past, and what didn't work. And beyond that he has undergone, or at least is supposed to have undergone, an intellectual discipline which gives him a better than average capacity to distinguish between probable truth and almost certain falsehood. It is a

✪ ELMER DAVIS was director of the O.W.I. of the U.S. Government from 1942 to 1945. Since 1945 he has been a news commentator for the American Broadcasting Company.

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quality which is badly needed today, perhaps more than at any other period in human history.

The classic instance of the scholar in a time of peril, I suppose, is Sidonius Apollinaris—a man who lacked the intellectual discipline which is the outstanding characteristic of modern scholarship, but was a pretty good practical thinker none the less. The peril of his day, however, was less comprehensive than ours. The civilization he represented was ultimately engulfed by barbarism, but enough of it remained to work as a yeast, and, after the lapse of centuries, to civilize the barbarians. What we now face, according to some, is a peril that would put an end to civilization and to barbarism, too. Centuries ago, our ancestors used to sing a hymn to the effect that *dies irae, dies illa, solvit saeclum in favilla;* and they sang it in the belief that some day it would literally come true. That superstition faded with the spread of enlightenment; but now that we have passed through the Age of Enlightenment, and beyond, this painful prospect has suddenly become, as Dr. Einstein has put it, within the range of technical possibility. That is not the same as saying that it is going to happen or is even likely to happen. Dr. Smyth of the Atomic Energy Commission assures me that the hydrogen bomb—even if we can make it go off, which is not yet entirely certain—would not set either the ocean or the atmosphere on fire. It is true that after he told me that, he was sufficiently concerned to go back and recheck his figures; but he got the same answer both times, and assuming that he is good at arithmetic, there seems no reason to suppose that the hydrogen bomb would do more than devastate a county.

That, however, would be sufficiently unpleasant, if it happened to be the county in which we live—and I live in Washington, which would certainly be the first target of an enemy attack, if it could get there, whatever weapons it might employ. And no one can say what further ingenuities may be devised by the human mind.

From these possibilities has arisen the opinion, so often repeated, that an atomic war would destroy civilization. That cliché is less common now than it was two or three years ago, but we still hear it too often; and among people who take it seriously it may create a state of mind which might lead to the actual destruction of civilization. As David Lilienthal has said, some people have become so

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frightened at the possibility of a push-button war that they embrace the illusion of a push-button peace—another Yalta, with far less excuse for error than at the original Yalta; a willingness to smooth over the surface and ignore the deep-seated differences that must be settled, and satisfactorily settled, before we could have a peace that promises to be reasonably just, and to preserve our essential freedoms. Now that state of mind can do great damage, if it spreads; and I venture to suggest that one possible service the scholar might render to the general public is some analysis of the nature of civilization, and what would or would not destroy it.

What is civilization? Is it the improved real estate which an atomic bomb, or any other kind of bomb, might destroy? The French appear to have thought so in 1940; they abandoned Paris without a fight, for fear it might be destroyed if they tried to defend it. Four years later, the French resistance movement had learned better; they fought, and fought successfully, to liberate the essence of Paris, at the risk that the physical body of Paris might be burned to the ground. We can all regret the destruction of such monuments of past civilization as medieval Nürnberg or the Dresden Altstadt, without feeling that the present state of civilization in Germany was materially injured thereby. What destroyed civilization in Germany was not the Eighth Air Force or the British Bomber Command, but the rule of Hitler; if civilization has trouble reviving in the Germany of today, it is not the physical ruins, but the moral and intellectual ruins that are its obstacles.

I use the term civilization, of course, in its common, not its Spenglerian sense; to Spengler a civilization was the corpse of a culture; but most of us mean by it what he meant by culture—something alive and growing, and not, as Spengler thought, predestined to follow an unchangeable course—not what has been achieved so far, still less its material monuments, but the capacity to go on achieving. And there is only one way you can destroy *that* kind of civilization—by suppressing the freedom of the mind. That means that an atomic war would not destroy civilization unless we—the free world—lost it. Any kind of war would destroy civilization, if we lost it to such enemies as the men in the Kremlin. "The next war, if it comes," wrote Bertrand Russell lately, "will be the greatest disaster that will

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have befallen the human race up to that moment. I can think of only one greater disaster—the extension of the Kremlin's power over the whole world." Or, as Lyman Bryson recently remarked, there are better things than peace. They are the things the next war will be fought for, if we have to fight it—the preservation of the faith once delivered to the fathers; of the liberties we cherish; above all, the liberty of thought, without which nothing that we call civilization can exist.

II

This is particularly the concern of the scholar and the intellectual; and, till lately, not enough of them have been making enough noise about it. Far more of them are talking about it now than were talking about it two or three years ago—which we may owe largely to Bertrand Russell, the first thinker of the first rank to draw this clear distinction and go around preaching it. But it should be obvious. You can find in science fiction, a type of literature to which I am much addicted, some appalling pictures of the possible future—the entire human race destroyed by radioactive dust, or the planet itself destroyed by a chain reaction. But none of these is the most appalling picture of the future that has been set down in print. That is George Orwell's *1984*—not only the most horrible book that has ever been published, but probably the most horrible that ever will be published; since if it ever becomes possible to imagine anything more horrible, nobody will be allowed to write about it.

Yet it is a completely logical, and a quite plausible, extrapolation of what is happening now, over large parts of the earth. Anybody who reads the Information Bulletin of the Russian Embassy in Washington, or the translations of current Russian writing that various learned societies provide for us, knows that what Orwell called Newspeak and Doublethink already exist; that the business of rewriting all history to fit the orthodoxy of the moment—however it may differ from the orthodoxy of yesterday or the orthodoxy of tomorrow—is going on right now. And not only history, and not only in Russia. This doctrine has infected even British scientists, in a nation which has perhaps made more useful contributions than any other to scientific thinking. Professor Blackett's recent book may

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have been sound physics—I am not competent to judge of that—but its distortions of contemporary history and politics are worthy of Senator McCarthy. You all know the story of the destruction of genetic science in Russia, where the Central Committee of the Communist party promulgated the dogma on heredity to which all Communist scientists must conform. J. B. S. Haldane is—or used to be a distinguished scientist; yet he wrote last summer in the *Modern Quarterly*, "We need not cease to believe in genes because they can be changed. On the contrary, if they were unchangeable, I as a Marxist could not believe in them." Not if a tentative and superseded hypothesis had said that they were unchangeable, but if they *were* unchangeable. And the rest of his article makes it clear that he wasn't trying to be funny, a pastime to which Marxists are not much given anyway. A man who thinks like that, whatever his past distinction, may possibly be competent to practice the merely quantitative sciences—though I am far from certain even of that—but he would seem to have become incapable of practicing any science that involves the exercise of judgment, whether it be genetics or papyrology. Yet it appears necessary for people who hold these doctrines to think like that. As Orwell wrote of his extrapolated totalitarian society, if the powerful are to retain their power indefinitely, then the prevailing mental condition must be controlled insanity. And a year after he wrote that, this was precisely the phrase used to describe his own mental condition by a very distinguished atomic scientist—Klaus Emil Julius Fuchs.

III

Many of you may have read a recent article in the *Foreign Affairs* quarterly by Isaiah Berlin, on political ideas in the twentieth century—an article not unlike the famous chapter on the snakes in Iceland. For he observes that in the past there were conflicts of ideas, whereas what characterizes our time is not the struggle of one set of ideas against another, but the mounting wave of hostility to *all* ideas as such. He admits that America and the British Commonwealth are still relatively free from that infection, but recent history would indicate that that freedom is only relative. Many of the letters I receive from listeners make it clear that there is a fairly con-

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siderable element in this country which is perhaps not yet Fascist, but which is certainly the material out of which fascism could be made. People who think, insofar as they may be said to think at all, with their bowels or their bile—people who regard accusation, when it conforms to their prejudices, as equivalent to conviction. I do not think there are enough of these people to subvert the republic—unless in the extremely unlikely case that there should at some time in the future be a coincidence between another great economic depression and the rise of some rabble rouser more gifted than any who exist now. But there are certainly enough of them to be worth watching.

More immediately dangerous, if not in the general public, at least in the intellectual world, are the Marxists. For they claim to have the answer—two answers. It is not only that they possess the absolute truth—or at least possess, in dialectical materialism, the infallible instrument for ascertaining it—and it is not always clear which they maintain. But they also argue that the free world possesses its own orthodoxies, and orthodoxies which may prove fallible. That argument was lately taken apart in the *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* by Professor Polanyi, a physicist turned economist. Science or scholarship, says Polanyi, can never be more than an affirmation of the things we believe in. But there are different kinds of belief, and different gradations of validity. Beliefs in the free world must be beliefs responsibly held—that is, in conscientious awareness of their own conceivable fallibility. We act on those beliefs; and if they don't work, if they prove to be wrong, we formulate a new hypothesis—again, with recognition that it might prove to be mistaken, but with a willingness to discard it if that should turn out to be the case.

That is not so very different from what was said long ago—that it may not be within the power of the human intelligence to have knowledge of the road from Athens to Thebes, but it is possible to have right opinion; and the way to find out whether your opinion is right is to start from Athens and see if you get to Thebes. What would happen to a Marxist who tried that—who, following the principles of Marxist science, started out from Athens to go to Thebes and found himself in Megara instead? Why, that wouldn't

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bother him; he would be relieved from any embarrassment by the practice of Doublethink. He could argue that the town he had arrived at was really Thebes; and if it looked like Megara, that was only a temporary phenomenon due to its encirclement by warmongering imperialistic powers. That is precisely the explanation which is offered in Moscow—or was, so long as anybody dared to ask for an explanation—for the fact that the state has not yet withered away.

This is substantially to submit intellectual discipline to the test of the stubborn and undeniable fact; but I know of no other test to to which human thinking can be submitted. Does it explain what is there? Or if it cannot, does it frankly admit that, and confess that it must wait for, and in the meantime strive for, a wider extension of human knowledge? This is a doctrine which might usefully be restated to the general public, now and then, to counteract the irrationalists who pretend that they are the wave of the future.

American scholarship is not only, in large degree, committed to that doctrine; it is also professionally committed to extending the frontiers of human knowledge, by what I believe are technically known as original contributions. By these, knowledge has indeed been widely extended; and so, perhaps, have other things. It has not been my fortune to read very many Ph.D. theses in the raw; but I am tolerably familiar with a good deal of what might be called the semi-finished products of modern research—the spade work—either in published volumes or in footnotes. Often this spade work is extremely useful; but sometimes, it seems to me, it deals with the sort of things that Plato called τὰ μὴ ὄντα—material which, in his opinion, was the subject matter not of knowledge, but of ignorance. I am far from adhering to all of Plato's views on epistemology (still less to his opinions on politics); but it seems to me that he had something when he held that the profoundest kind of ignorance is knowledge, or supposed knowledge, of the things that are not. If you want documentation of that argument, I can cite the Congressional Record, *passim*.

IV

I hope this will not be interpreted as an appeal for a restriction

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on research; it is merely intended as the expression of a hope that research workers may take more care than is always the case at present that the conclusions drawn from their investigations make sense. Perhaps, indeed, the function of the scholar and the intellectual in a time of peril might be summed up in the words of a man whose scholarship appears to have been very sketchy, whose powerful intellect was dominated by his still more powerful emotions, but who nevertheless said much that is worth remembering. For instance, "Prove all things; hold fast that which is good." Modern scholarship has not been deficient in meeting the first of these demands; it has not always been too careful about the second. There always will be, and always must be, revisions in the field of history (the only field in which I have even an amateur's competence)—not only because each new generation is under a moral obligation to prove that its parents were wrong; not only because each new crop of Ph.D.'s must earn its union cards by original contributions to human knowledge, even if its members work in a field where there is nothing left to contribute but contributions of knowledge to the things that are not—but also because the record of the past will have a different meaning to each new generation in the light of its own problems. But that does not mean that it is impossible, in many periods of history, to come by now to some general agreement on what actually occurred, however, people may differ on what it meant.

One further appeal might be made to the more responsible scholars. They are by definition men who know something, and know at least a good deal about what it means—who have been trained up to a superior ability to discriminate between probable truth and almost certain falsehood. And in a time of peril, it might be useful for them to pass on more of it to the general public, in a form the general public can understand.

This is now being widely done, far more so than half a century ago, but not yet widely enough. Some ten or twenty books pass across my desk every week; they are all "important," or at least are intended to be by their authors, and (perhaps fallaciously) believed to be by their publishers. The ones I start reading are the ones that really look important; the ones I finish are those that can be read without more trouble than they are worth. I may well miss some-

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thing; but everybody must miss something, in a life of twenty-five or thirty thousand days of only twenty-four hours each; and what I miss is what would take too much time to dig out. This obscurity on the part of some scholars may be due in some degree to the mere distaste of the professional for descending to a popular level (though this failing seems to be far more common among poets), but often it is based on more respectable grounds. It is not only, as Bernard De Voto has written, that many scholars feel they must go over and over their manuscripts in the quest for an absolute accuracy that is hardly ever attainable, but that is likely to be demanded by their colleagues, who review the work in professional publications, with an eagle eye for typographical errors. Not only that—there are also the conscientious scruples of the man who is never quite sure that he knows enough; who can never bring himself to say, "Well, this is the best I can do; I'll start from here." In the latter case he may die with his great work unwritten, as Lord Acton did; in the former case he may write it, but it is likely to remain unread.

An instance—a book now on my table. There has just been published a volume of essays presented to John Dewey, by some of his friends and colleagues. Such a presentation is in an old and honorable academic tradition; but these essays are not merely presented to John Dewey; they are presented by a publisher to anybody who will pay three dollars and a half for them. And there is good reason for that. Perhaps no man now living has had more influence on American education and American thinking than John Dewey; but that influence comes to us profanes at third hand, filtered through the people who taught us in school, and the professors of pedagogy and methodology who taught those teachers. It would be very useful for the average intelligent reader to get an expert appraisal of just what Dewey's influence has been, in the various fields of thought.

But he won't get it from this book, unless he hires a translator. If it were written in Chinese, it would be intelligible to all sinologues; it is actually written in the trade jargon of the philosophy industry, and hence is intelligible to all professors of philosophy. Many of the authors are known to be capable of writing in English, but no doubt every one of them, aware that his first readers would be pro-

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fessors of philosophy, preferred to write in a more esoteric language, a language in which he could make himself clear and leave his critics the least opportunity for picking flaws in his argument. And by so doing, they came pretty near making sure that their first readers would also be their last readers.

If the scholar in a time of peril has something worth saying, he must feel that it is worth reading—and worth reading not merely by his professional colleagues, but by the general public. And the general public is interested in it in two respects—first, is it written in language that we can understand? And second, is it actually a work of scholarship? That is, does it correctly report what has happened (whatever conclusions the author may choose to draw from it), and do those conclusions, balanced against the whole field of knowledge in which the author is operating, make sense? For (I repeat) this is a time in which the general public needs the accurate and judicious conclusions which the scholar is equipped to give, and the scholar needs the understanding and support which he must get from the general public, if he is to go on being a scholar. This *is* a time of peril; we need the best leadership we can get, and also the best informed followership—if we are going to dig our way out of it.

Such leadership can be given; take for instance that excellent monthly newspaper, the *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*. The very best scientists do not seem to feel that they demean themselves by writing for it, and they have no difficulty in so writing that the general reader can understand what they are talking about. And certainly the number of scholarly histories that are also readable histories has greatly increased in recent years. But the layman, who needs the scholar, is likely to want more; and the scholar, who needs the layman, could perform an essential service by providing it. He is aware that he can never have knowledge of the road from Athens to Thebes; he is tempted to hesitate and revise and postpone, not sure that the opinion which he holds is correct. But in the meantime a lot of people have to get from Athens to Thebes, and they look to the man who knows more than they do to give them a road map—a map conscientiously drawn, with any uncertainty about detours scrupulously noted. But still the best map he can now devise—and a map they can read.

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The American Mission

CLINTON ROSSITER

THE BELIEF that God or Providence or Fate occasionally singles out a nation for some higher destiny is a striking example of the power of ideas in history. It sustained ancient Israel, the "holy people unto the Lord thy God"; it apparently helps sustain Soviet Russia, "the beacon of the toilers in every land." And surely the vigorous American conviction that God also chose this people to fulfill an historic mission has been a profound ideological force in our national development.

We seem to have been chosen for different missions at different times. The Puritan of 1640, the revolutionary of 1776, the Federalist of 1800, the expansionist of 1850, the Union soldier of 1865, the missionary of 1875, the imperialist of 1900, the idealist of 1917, the interventionist or isolationist of 1940—each of these has entertained his own surmise of the purpose for which America was called into being. Yet one solid belief has flourished from the beginning as the finest expression of American nationalism. This is the concept of the model republic, an article of collective faith that we may properly term *the* American Mission.

It is a simple belief—comprehensible, viable, and endlessly serviceable. It assumes that God, at the proper stage in the march of history, called forth certain hardy souls from the old and privilege-ridden nations; that He carried these precious few to a new world and presented them and their descendants with an environment ideally suited to the development of a free society; and that in bestowing His grace He also bestowed a peculiar responsibility for the success of popular institutions. Were the Americans to fail in their experiment in self-government, they would fail not only themselves, but all

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men wanting or deserving to be free. If such government could not work here, it could not work anywhere. America was to serve as a "testament to freedom." Or, to vary the analogy, it was to be the "laboratory of democracy," in which God could mix the best of all possible men with the best of all possible environments, and determine once and for all whether liberty was worth the pains.

The belief in the Mission, in one variant or another, has been part of the American tradition since the first settlements. Great and remembered men, presidents and philosophers, and small and forgotten men, preachers and country editors, have stated and restated their belief in our unique responsibility for the defense of human freedom. Now, in a time when Americans are especially self-conscious and soul-searching about their obligations to other nations, the idea of the Mission invokes our renewed attention. The progress of this idea is worth recording.

Massachusetts Bay was the nursery of the Mission. Winthrop and Cotton, and a host of lesser men, looked upon themselves as latter-day Israelites, never doubting that God had brought them over the sea for a purpose higher than their own well-being. The kind of men they were, the trials they had borne, and the conditions under which they hacked out their wilderness Zion fostered a well-nigh universal assumption that this was not just *an* experiment, but *the* experiment, in the manner of society that God had ordained for his chosen vessels. The impassioned cry of William Stoughton in his election sermon of 1668—"God sifted a whole Nation that He might send Choice Grain over into this Wilderness"—was echoed in dozens of doughty books like Cotton Mather's *Magnalia Christi Americana* (1702) and Edward Johnson's *Wonder-Working Providences of Zion's Saviour in New England* (1654), and in dozens of pioneer pulpits from Saco to Southbury.

Like all righteous people, the New England Saints were prone to self-righteousness, and heavy upon the non-conformist lay the hand of the Puritan who felt himself in the hand of God. Yet there is something admirable about these colonials who believed so tenaciously in their moral-historic ascendancy over all other nations, however proud and mighty, and who could bring added vigor to their efforts by exhorting one another to repay God for His extra care

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with extra zeal in His service. In a simpler age, when the power of ideas was more visible than today, it was a matter of consequence that men believed, in the words of Jonathan Edwards, that America was called to be "the glorious renovator of the world."

Toward the end of the seventeenth century, the thoughts of more and more colonials shifted from piety to liberty, and the true American Mission took widespread root. One of the first to express this thought was John Wise of Ipswich, who ended his noble democratic preaching in 1725, as he had begun in 1675, by exhorting his listeners to give "recognition of what God has done for these famous English colonies" and govern themselves after the dictates of reason. At the same time, three further variations of the mission of America won popular acceptance: as asylum for the "miserable people on the continent or isles of Europe"; as future savior of the mother country in distress; and as greatest and richest of nations, destined by its splendor and spiritual elevation to carry all older nations in its orbit. The first two of these prophetic and hortatory sentiments were most eloquently proclaimed by Jonathan Mayhew of Boston in *The Snare Broken*, a sermon of sober rejoicing on the repeal of the Stamp Act. The mission of America as asylum was also vigorously advertised by such revolutionary figures as Franklin, Paine, Jefferson and Freneau. The prophecy of untold future splendor was spoken by many Americans, but it remained for an Englishman, the estimable Berkeley, to voice, some fifty years before the Revolution, the grandest fancy of American destiny:

> There shall be sung another golden age,
> The rise of empire and of arts. . . .
> Westward the course of empire takes its way.

Despite these refinements and flights of imagination, the central idea of America's divinely-appointed mission remained that of a people who by mere example would advertise liberty to all nations. This vision was a conspicuous arrow in the well-filled quiver of the great revolutionaries. For them spoke John Adams as early as 1765: "I always consider the settlement of America with reverence and wonder, as the opening of a grand scheme and design in Providence for the illumination and emancipation of the slavish part of mankind

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all over the earth." And he agreed with hundreds of other patriots that the defeat of the colonies would mean the defeat of liberty everywhere.

The American Mission came to flower with the adoption of the Constitution. The "Father of the Constitution" reminded the Philadelphia convention that "it was more than probable we were now digesting a plan which in its operation would decide forever the fate of Republican Government"—reason enough to aim for the best! Washington, too, was conscious of the Mission. In his first inaugural address he expressed the conviction that "the preservation of the sacred fire of liberty and the destiny of the republican model of government are justly considered, perhaps, as *deeply,* as *finally,* staked on the experiment intrusted to the hands of the American people." In his farewell address he hoped that the "free Constitution" would be worked in such a manner that it would recommend itself "to the applause, the affection, and the adoption of every nation which is yet a stranger to it."

The Jeffersonians were, if anything, even stouter believers in the higher destiny of the infant republic. Jefferson, who had proposed that the seal of the United States picture "the children of Israel in the wilderness led by a cloud by day and a pillar by night," never wearied of saying that Americans had a clear responsibility for the promotion of liberty. In 1802 he wrote Dr. Priestley:

> We feel that we are acting under obligations not confined to the limits of our own society. It is impossible not to be sensible that we are acting for all mankind; that circumstances denied to others, but indulged to us, have imposed on us the duty of proving what is the degree of freedom and self-government in which a society may venture to leave its individual members.

And just ten days before he died, in the last of his exhortations, he could say of the Declaration of Independence:

> May it be to the world, what I believe it will be (to some parts sooner, to others later, but finally to all), the signal of arousing men to burst the chains under which monkish ignorance and superstition had persuaded them to bind themselves, and to assume the blessings and security of self-government.

For all men in this heroic age, whether Federalist or Republican, merchant or "mechanick," pious or secular, President Ezra Stiles of

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Yale spoke as prophet of inspiration in *The United States Elevated to Glory and Honor*. If he foretold wealth and might and dominion, he did so only to remind his Connecticut listeners that God gave these good things to those who deserved them, in this instance to a people determined to prove to a doubting world that "a democratic polity for millions, standing upon the broad basis of the people at large," could be made to work. The American Mission was an influential ideological force in the formative years of the Republic.

In the decades of expansion, most Americans lost sight of the interpretation of the nation's mission formulated by Washington and Jefferson. This was the age of Manifest Destiny, a phrase of huge import coined by John O'Sullivan in his *Democratic Review* in 1845. The loudly-voiced assertion that it was America's duty to expand without delay to its natural geographic limits obscured the simpler, uncombative beliefs of the Founding Fathers. Even the concept of America as asylum for the "huddled masses yearning to breathe free" was made to serve this muscular version of the national destiny. "If ours is to be the home of the oppressed," thundered Representative Duncan of Ohio in the debate over Oregon, "we must extend our territory in latitude and longitude to the demand of the millions who are to follow us, as well of our own posterity as those who are invited to our peaceful shores to partake in our republican institutions."

Yet the idea of the model republic had lost none of its appeal for more thoughtful men. Andrew Jackson reminded his fellow-countrymen that "the eyes of all nations are fixed on our Republic," and in his farewell address observed that "Providence has showered on this favored land blessings without number, and has chosen you as the guardians of freedom, to preserve it for the benefit of the human race." No less convinced of this truth were his opponents Story and Calhoun. Said the first of these, "We stand the latest, and, if we fail, probably the last experiment of self-government by the people." Said the second, "We may . . . do more to extend liberty by our example over this continent and the world generally, than would be done by a thousand victories." Representative Severance of Maine countered the shrill cries of the expansionists by urging that we "rather extend the 'area of freedom' by . . . our bright and shining example as a pattern republic."

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The philosopher and the poet joined the statesman in this persuasion. Emerson proclaimed his belief in the nation's peculiar destiny: "The Office of America is to liberate. . . . I wish to see America a benefactor such as no country ever was." He hoped profoundly that we would contribute "our peculiar and legitimate advantages to the benefit of humanity."

And, of course, Walt Whitman:

> For we cannot tarry here,
> We must march. . . . We must bear the brunt of danger,
> We the youthful sinewy races, all the rest on us depend,
> Pioneers! O Pioneers!

Politer folk preferred to hear this message from Longfellow:

> Thou, too, sail on, O ship of State!
> Sail on, O UNION, strong and great!
> Humanity with all its fears,
> With all the hopes of future years,
> Is hanging breathless on thy fate!

The Mission was given one final prewar turn by the economist Henry Carey. In his *Principles of Social Science*, published some eleven years after Marx had proclaimed the inexorable antagonism of classes, Carey called America to testify that the class struggle was not the inevitable consequence of an industrial civilization.

> Such is the true mission of the United States . . . to prove that among the people of the world, whether agriculturists, manufacturers, or merchants, there is perfect harmony of interests, and that the happiness of individuals, as well as the grandeur of nations, is to be promoted by that greatest of all commandments, "Do unto others as ye would that others should do unto you."

The fateful meeting of the great American and the great American crisis cast this antique doctrine in a new and vital role. Repeatedly Lincoln expressed the persuasion that the cause of free government everywhere hung in the balance of this epic struggle, and repeatedly this theme was hammered home in press and pulpit. For Lincoln the Mission was an article of national faith, "felt in the blood and felt along the heart." His profound distaste for slavery derived to an important degree from his opinion that the mere existence of human

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bondage as a legal and social institution virtually destroyed our claims to be the model republic. On the road to Washington he dedicated himself to "that sentiment in the Declaration of Independence which gave liberty not alone to the people of this country, but hope to all the world, for all future time." And in his dramatic message to the special session of Congress, July 4, 1861, he made clear the historic purpose for which he at least could justify the letting of fraternal blood:

> This issue embraces more than the fate of these United States. . . . This is essentially a people's contest. On the side of the Union it is a struggle for maintaining in the world that form and substance of government whose leading object is to elevate the condition of men.

He returned to this belief again and again, as if it alone had power to revive his flagging faith and give some semblance of moral purpose to a war that must have often seemed a senseless pageant of suffering and corruption. He confided to Hay, "For my part, I consider [that] the central idea pervading this struggle is the necessity that is upon us, of proving that popular government is not an absurdity." He reminded Congress that it was not alone the Union but "the last, best hope of earth" that we would "nobly save or meanly lose." And finally at Gettysburg he made clear that he had acted and "these honored dead" had fought so "that government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth." Thus, with the help of the American Mission, did Lincoln sublimate into an eternal symbol the best-remembered of the nation's battlefields.

In the decades of industrial, continental, and finally overseas expansion that followed the close of the Civil War, the doctrine of the mission was twisted into several unlovely and almost unrecognizable shapes. The generation of high-spirited Americans who went a-whoring after the false gods of imperialism likewise went a-whoring on a swarm of idealistic but hardly democratic missions. Anglo-Saxony, the native version of the myth of the superior people, called upon Americans to ready themselves for inevitable triumph in the mysterious process of racial Darwinism. A close kin was the White Man's Burden, which a host of American Kiplings heralded as America's mission of the twentieth century. The belief in inevitable and

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God-given empire, an inflated version of Manifest Destiny, was voiced by Mahan, Lodge, Beveridge and many others. Even the missionaries, especially those of the more vigorous Protestant groups, fell victims to this unattractive imperialistic trauma. "The taste of empire is in the mouth of the people," observed the Washington *Post*, "even as the taste of blood in the jungle." The true American Mission was weak ideological meat for a people with Havana and Manila on their hands and minds. And the Isthmus of Panama! To Senator Morgan of Alabama, the building of the canal had become "the proud mission of our Government and people, under a providence that is as peculiar to them as the founding of the kingdom of the Messiah was to the seed of Abraham."

The most dramatic proponent of these imperialistic notions was, of course, the rough-riding President. Roosevelt never doubted that the hand of God pointed out the highroad of international stewardship to the deserving American Republic. A weird but decipherable combination of democrat, jingo, missionary and Anglo-Saxon, he had nothing but contempt for the argument that America should teach the world democracy by example alone. In the end, perhaps, the spirit of the age was more boldly heralded by his friend Beveridge, although Roosevelt would have been "*de*-lighted" to associate himself with these remarks:

> God has not been preparing the English-speaking and Teutonic peoples for a thousand years for nothing but vain and idle self-contemplation and self-admiration. No! He has made us the master organizers of the world to establish system where chaos reigns. He has given us the spirit of progress to overwhelm the forces of reaction throughout the earth. He has made us adepts in government that we may administer government among savage and senile peoples. Were it not for such a force as this the world would relapse into barbarism and night. And of all our race He has marked the American people as His chosen nation to finally lead in the regeneration of the world.

This was hardly the American Mission as conceived by Washington and Lincoln.

It remained for Woodrow Wilson to hack away this jungle growth and lay bare the American Mission in its pristine simplicity. Not only did he mount that rescue-party for freedom that Mayhew had foretold some one hundred fifty years before, but he created almost

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single-handed a pattern of high-minded values as the ideological support for American participation. And of these none was more exalted than the Mission. He told Americans that this nation had always been destined to lead mankind "in the assertion of the rights of peoples and the rights of free nations; as destined to set a responsible example to all the world of what free Government is and can do for the maintenance of right standards, both national and international." Our immediate mission was to make the world safe for democracy; our ultimate mission was to show the world that democracy was worth saving.

The missionary urge, the call to duty that assigns the Republic an historic responsibility nobler than the mere defense of its own independence, lives on in a half-dozen recognizable forms. Harry S. Truman, Henry Luce, Henry Wallace, Francis Biddle, Eric Johnston, David Lilienthal and Paul Hoffman are a few of those who have recently exhorted their countrymen in the idiom of the mission. Yet their versions, most of which look to the export of American ideas and institutions, are framed in terms of active proselytism. The true American Mission seems to have lost its popular appeal—perhaps because there are now so many other "testaments to freedom," perhaps because it lends itself so easily to the discredited cause of isolation, certainly because those Americans who recognize our obligations to other nations appreciate that the force of good example is not enough in this savage world.

Yet it would be unfortunate were we to lose sight of the authentic American Mission. If we must have a mission—and historically and spiritually we probably must, whether dictated by God or Providence or sheer utility—why should it not be this humane and humble version of a universal trait of national consciousness? Admittedly it can serve as a cloak for the revival of the most short-sighted, ethnocentric stamp of isolationism, but only if internationally-minded Americans permit it to be stolen from their keeping. The American Mission, a view of national destiny neither vulgar nor imperialistic, can certainly be squared with a healthy attitude of international cooperation. And at the same time it can continue to serve as a healthy spur to domestic improvement—in race relations, education, politics, labor-management relations, and all the other major

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areas in which we might, if we felt the world's gaze fixed upon us, be better democrats.

And no matter what positive obligations we assume toward other nations, or what ideological adjustments we make in assuming them, it is inconceivable that this doctrine, which Ralph H. Gabriel ranks with the fundamental law and the free individual as one of the three leading articles of our democratic faith, could be cast upon the scrap heap of outworn American ideologies. If we are no longer the only testament to freedom, we can still be the most notable. America, which seeks to meet the vast problems of sectional, economic, racial and religious diversity with democratic solutions, has much to teach by mere example. The American Mission is yet to be fulfilled.

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Making the Days Seem Long

JOSEPH WOOD KRUTCH

THIS MORNING I saw through my window the first idle flakes of the year's first real snow. Small, scattered and casual, they might have passed almost unnoticed. But it is thus that great things begin, and to a practiced eye they had the air of meaning business.

They were not fluffy like the playful flakes of a precocious flurry, nor wet like the end-of-the-season falls, which turn first to sleet and then to rain. Instead, they were the single, hard, sparkling little crystals which look as though they intended to remain just that, and come down with quiet confidence, as though they knew they are merely the advance guard of many to follow and to support them. The first tender green of April is not more deceptively tentative, more unspectacular in appearance. Neither is it surer of itself. Equally, the first green and the first white seem to say: "I know that my time has come. It is now that I shall inherit the earth."

Such things as this one never quite remembers. One recognizes them when they appear again, as one recognizes the opening bars of a symphony one could not whistle or hum. What is to follow is not so much recalled as prepared for, and it will magically combine the charm of the familiar with the charm of the new. Memory can never reconstruct for itself the infinite, felicitous detail. Winter, like Spring and like Mozart, is always richer and more varied than one remembered it.

I have, when I care to look back at them, my charts and my tables. On the graph of the daily maxima and minima recorded by my thermometer, the coming of winter means two irregular lines which erratically rise and fall while they tend ever downward. In my diary it means, less nakedly, a series of visible phenomena, from the blazing

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of the dying leaves to the hardening of the ground and the gradual fading of color, until blackness and whiteness come to dominate. But no sum of such details will add up to any adequate account of what has been happening. It fails, as any analysis of any work of art must fail, to suggest the mighty, interrelated wholeness of a process whose inevitable logic is its greatest secret.

Any analogy with winter dooms us to choose a lesser thing for comparison with that which we intend to exalt. What is now about to begin, Thoreau grandly denominated "that grand old poem called Winter." One is not likely to better him when he is, as here, at his best. And yet even a poem is not really so complex a thing as this winter which operates not only upon the mind, but upon all the senses as well, and which one does not merely contemplate because one is also a part of it. Perhaps it is a poem more nearly than it is anything else. But it is also a drama, a symphony, and a picture.

Some small part of the drama is visible even from a box seat in front of a window through which one may catch glimpses of birds and beasts whose existence is affected far more drastically than ours, and one may guess also at what is going on below the surface of the snow; below even the surface of soil, where innumerable creatures are sleeping—almost as deeply as the very tree roots—a sleep from which some will awaken, but which, for some others, will pass into imperceptible death. That same window may become also a picture-frame, though it is the frame of a picture which changes as no painted picture can; a picture which passes through a series of modulations, each in itself as beautiful as though it were a final end—to become successively the picture of Summer, the picture of Autumn, and finally the picture of Winter.

The very style of the artist seems to change, as he gives his allegiance to one school after another. In summer he was all for Dutch or German minuteness. He cluttered his canvas with detail; affected on a perhaps unsuitably large scale the methods of the miniaturist. As autumn came, he began to simplify, to go in for broader, bolder effects; and then, as the snow came, he realized the impressiveness of large areas and large masses. At last, when everything except the largest features of any landscape has been buried, he becomes almost an abstractionist. There seems nothing left to paint except an idea.

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But one is not compelled to remain always standing before the picture-frame, or confined to the spectator's side of the proscenium. One may walk into the picture, become part of the poem, or even participate in the drama itself. From no mere canvas does the wind actually blow; there is no poem from which a snowflake can detach itself to melt upon the cheek. From every man-made poem, or picture, or drama, one is to some extent excluded. A certain separateness from it is necessary if it is to be art at all. We must contemplate and we must not intervene. But of nature's poems and pictures we are invited to become a part. This winter which is just coming in offers the detachment of an aesthetic experience, combined with the immediacy of living.

II

I know now that my judgment of this morning's intentions was correct. The tentative fall did grow steadily more confident and purposeful; incredibly, the sum of the almost infinitesimal, laid gently down upon another infinitesimal, added up to a palpable thickness. Within a few hours the snowplow was making its first trip up my road, and within a few hours more that road had become impassable again.

In our well-organized and dependably functioning society, the threat implied is remote. I know that our responsible First Selectman will employ the machines at his disposal to re-establish my access to the village upon which I am dependent. It is only rarely that I am cut off for more than a few hours even from the train which would take me to the city, should I want to go there. The possibility of being seriously snowbound is hardly more than theoretical. And yet, ready as a whole organization is to see that I do not even need to be rescued, I have a sense I could never have had in the city itself, of what the threat of winter might be. And we are so curiously constituted, that terrors of which only a shadow remains become strangely exhilarating. They transform themselves into their aesthetic counterparts, and become almost like those provided by melodrama, or even by tragedy. The danger has disappeared, but the adventure is left.

Perhaps to enjoy the aesthetic pleasure of even a simulated threat without a twinge of remembered terror, one needs to be among the

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fortunate who have never had to struggle too frequently in the past with the real thing. Vilhjalmur Stefansson remarks that for such an adventure as an Arctic expedition, people who have led a hard life are no good. Your common sailor, your eskimo even, grows sullenly rebellious when asked to meet conditions only a little more rigorous than those which are his common lot. Though his food has never been good, it is tremendously important to him that it should not be even a little bit worse; and since danger is his business, he runs no unnecessary risks. For an adventure one must have adventurers, and that means usually the privileged—say, a college youth who has enjoyed all the "privileges" of his class. He may find a real pleasure in being compelled to eat what the sailor would rebel against, and will voluntarily face a danger for the sake of some intangible achievement. He can, in other words, savor the thing aesthetically, and an adventure is merely a hardship aesthetically considered.

I have observed the two attitudes traceable to two similar pasts in the case of my two cats. One of them was raised by an unusually devoted mother in a human environment where he never met anything but kindness. Before he opened his eyes, he was conditioned to assume that whatever he needed would be provided, and that his comfort, his convenience even, would be considered by his human protectors before their own. The other was born under a farmyard porch in the depth of winter, and grew up precariously in a rough world of dogs, of children, and of adults who barely tolerated him.

According to one theory of education the first should be "spoiled" and the second prepared to meet the world. Yet when the snow comes, the one who should be a softie takes it as a delightful adventure. He races here and there, and delightedly runs into the drifts after snow balls. The other, who ought to be tough, is merely distressed; and when I coax him out of doors he sits howling dismally on the doorstep until admitted again.

One attitude is precisely that of the sportsman, the other that of those to whom what is called adventure is no more than hardship. Contemplating the two has compelled me to revise my opinion concerning one of the principles of modern education. The theory that children should be made to feel absolutely secure and perpetually surrounded by love used to strike me as dubious. It would give them,

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it seemed to me, a very false idea of what the world is like; would prepare them very badly for the shock of discovering that love cannot be taken for granted, and that environments are not always propitious. But perhaps perfect security at the right time makes for boldness in the future, and perhaps to meet distress too early is to be made forever timid.

I must add, nevertheless, that the adventurous cat is also and in other ways unmistakably the extrovert, and I am not one of those who assume that any personality, even tempered by introversion, is to just that extent unfortunate and undesirable. Of the two cats it is the unadventurous one who is conspicuously fond of music—and of the very best music too. But that is another story.

III

In my own small domain, for which the state takes no responsibility, the change is more drastic than on the roads. Up until now I strolled casually out the door to the garage or the poultry house. Now even a trip to the bird-feeder to replenish its store takes on the character of an expedition, which must be prepared for in a special costume. Creatures more exposed than I must change more drastically their habits. Hardly had the snow begun before the birds, seeming to sense what was impending, began to come in greater and greater numbers to feed. The woodpeckers hammered persistently at the suet; the chickadees cued up, waiting their turn to get at the peanut butter—become the favorite food of these creatures brought within the grocery stores' sphere of influence. Even the wary jays, ordinarily disinclined to approach after the human inhabitants of the house are stirring, came in great flocks to snatch and carry away large morsels of food, each sufficient to make several meals for a smaller bird.

But the snow had also precipitated more violent dramas. This morning I discovered that two of my pet ducks had disappeared, and a trail of bloody feathers beside footprints in the snow told the tale of a marauding fox. All fall the ducks had been equally accessible, but the killer had smaller game to be caught in regions more remote from the danger of man. Now winter had made him bold. He must, indeed, have dared to come in daylight, for the door was closed against him at night.

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Shut snugly indoors, as at this moment I am, these dramas seem rather remote. Somewhat shamefacedly, I confess that it is thus most of my wintertime is passed, and that for me a little struggle with the elements—necessary as it is—goes a rather long way. The coming in again is likely to be the best part of any expedition, and the sense of peace and remoteness the best part of the season. It is good to discover how self-sufficient one can be, and perhaps with this sense of reserved well-being there is mingled just a little of the Lucretian complacency —the pleasure of realizing not that others must struggle, but merely that I need not.

Even a definitely closed road, especially a road just difficult enough to discourage travel, is not an unmixed evil. Nearly everyone goes too many places too frequently, and snow can be a great alleviator of the American restlessness. If I cannot get out to the world, the world also cannot get in to me, and there are times when that fact seems good, no matter which way one looks at it. Overly gregarious people sometimes pity me for being cut off, but there are days, weeks even, when I see nothing funny in the old story of the London *Times* and the headline with which it announced a storm over the Channel: "CONTINENT ISOLATED." I do not expect the world to miss me, but if anyone feels cut off, it is not I.

Hamlet boasted that he could be confined in a nutshell and feel himself lord of infinite space. I shall certainly not go so far as that. I know what claustrophobia is like, and the roomiest nutshell would not be enough. This may be what Hamlet meant by his bad dreams. But I can sometimes be glad that for a few days at least I am not forced—or even tempted—to go further than my own legs will carry me. "Water," Samuel Johnson once said in rebuke to Boswell, who was about to launch into a comparison between the Bay of Naples and a Scottish harbor, "looks much the same everywhere." That has generally been cited to prove Johnson had no appreciation of natural scenery. And perhaps he did not. But his remark might be taken to mean just what Thoreau's boast that he had traveled extensively in Concord certainly did mean—namely, that nature is always beautiful, and that there is less danger of exhausting one's own few acres than there is of traveling so widely that one never really sees anything. Snow, like water, "looks much the same everywhere."

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But it is very much worth looking at, nevertheless, wherever one may find it. I have walked through the white drifts near the summit of the Jungfrau in July, and I am glad that I have—partly because I now know that, beautiful as it was there, it is hardly less so in Connecticut, where I can observe it more at my leisure and get to know it better.

Your Hindu fakir sits on nails in the public square and meditates on eternity. To be able to do so is perhaps to offer proof of a detachment achieved through an admirable discipline. Weak Westerners like myself need, however, aids to contemplation rather than opportunities to demonstrate over what obstacles we can triumph; and a little winter isolation provides a very favorable set of circumstances. In rare moments, it will bring one as close as one's individual nature makes possible to the mystic's sense of oneness, but on a more rational level it makes possible also a special kind of detachment, and it forces one to face up to conclusions from which distraction would furnish an escape. New thoughts cannot be expected too frequently, but it is something to find oneself, in Mr. Frost's now famous phrase, "More sure of all I thought before."

I know that not everyone likes to be alone, even for a short time. What surprises me, however, is the fact that those who do not, are so often the very ones who say that they are very happy and that they love to live. How, I often wonder, can they possibly know. When are they quiet enough to ask the question or to get the answer? So much of life passes in busy unconsciousness. Most of the time that most men are either working or playing, they are too "occupied" to be aware even that they are living. Someone else, so it always seems to me, might just as well be doing these things for them. They gather in groups as though each felt the need to have others assure him that he really exists. Why, I wonder, does he not shut himself up somewhere for a day and find out? If the answer should turn out to be in the negative, then he might at least reconcile himself to the fact; if in the affirmative, then he might have the question happily settled once and for all. He would not have to go through life as though afraid of learning its answer.

Those who talk frankly of their need for "distraction" are sometimes frowned upon by the serious minded, but those who boast that they want always to be "occupied" are usually admired. And yet the

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two things turn out very often to be the same thing, or at least to have the same object, and I have no more respect for the man who must always be busy than for the one who must always be distracted. We are even advised to take our minds off ourselves, but it seems to me—whatever the psychiatrists may say about the minority who pass through their hands—that a far larger number of people should be advised, once at least, to put their minds *on* themselves, where, obviously, they have not very often been. "We only live once" is a saying most inappropriate on the lips where it is most often found, for they most commonly are the lips of those who seem determined to be unaware that they are living that once.

Sometimes a sympathetic acquaintance who knows what I have been doing—and what I have not been doing—asks me pityingly if "the days do not seem long." Of course they do. That is one of the best things about them. How else, in heaven's name, should one want them to seem? What confession—if one pretends to finds existence sweet—could be more dreadful than speaking happily of the time which seems short; than to say, not with regret but with an air of self-congratulation, "I do not know where the day went"—or the week, or the month, or the year, or, finally, the lifetime itself. I have often been bored at the cocktail or the dinner party, and boredom can be a dreadful thing—while it is going on. But it is curiously difficult to remember. It usually leaves no scar, and I am not sure that I always resent the hours of boredom as much as I do the time spent when I was merely distracted. When one is bored, one at least knows that one is alive, and life is lengthened, unpleasantly though it may be.

But the day which is delightfully long when measured in terms of that psychological time which alone means anything, is more often than not spent in one's own home and its immediate familiar environs; the day when one goes nowhere, has no engagements, and when the only companion is someone known well enough and long enough to be almost another self. Those are the days which "seem long" and would be welcome to seem even longer. Not one moment passes unnoticed, not one fails to make its contribution. If all one's days counted for so much, then three score years and ten would not be a short time. And if one cannot live such days without being aware

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that time is passing, no matter how slowly, if every tick of the clock is recognized as counting off one more half-second deducted from those allotted, that fact grows out of one of the ineluctable contingencies of our life, for we cannot remember that we are living without remembering also that time is passing.

Last night the temperature dropped to below zero for the first time this season. Today the air is still and the sunshine sparkling, but there is an additional bite in the air which gives another reason for coming in out of it quickly, and for spending most of the day in the house. Even there, where it is as warm as one could wish, the fur of the cats crackles when one strokes it, as though it had maintained some kind of sympathy with the out-of-doors. This, I can see now, will be one of those days I have been attempting to describe. It is possible that I may have some thought I never had before, that I shall see something in a new light. But nothing of the sort is necessary to make life worth living. The old will do very nicely—the old thoughts and the old delights—for they will not seem old to me. The next sixteen hours will be priceless, and before I go to bed I shall be able to say:

> Be fair or foul, come rain or shine
> The joys I have possessed in spite of fate are mine;
> Not Heaven itself upon the past has power
> What has been has been, and I have had my hour.

That, I submit, is what ought to be called "success in life."

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Another Country

ELIZABETH STANTON HARDY

Bleak is this winter day that lies
Marmorial crystal, under funeral skies.

Yet sheer quicksilver, in secret veins
Runs under the snow's
Cover of death.
A life whose pulse-beat shows
No visible breath.

Sun, slanting to winter peak,
Circles the sign of Capricorn.
Again the slow, inevitable turning back
Along the appointed lanes of zodiac.

The Sleeper stirs, awakening;
Upon her cheek
A wind of promise blows, borne
From some remembered country of the sun.

✪ ELIZABETH STANTON HARDY is the author of a book of poems, *Time in the Turning*, published in 1940. Her poems have appeared in the *Saturday Review of Literature*, *Voices*, THE AMERICAN SCHOLAR and other magazines.

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A Discussion of Modern Painting

EDGAR LEVY

II. Expressionism and Cubism

IT IS RECOGNIZED that the line connecting Cubism with Cézanne is direct and unbroken. The roots of Cubism may be found in Cézanne's work and, reciprocally, the Cubists have demonstrated Cézanne's overwhelming importance by the vitality of their own accomplishment. Not so much may be asserted of Expressionism and Van Gogh. For though the Expressionists drew inspiration and courage from Van Gogh's painting, they were not strictly dependent on it, and have not focused attention on it as the indispensable source of their technique. If not Van Gogh, another equally convenient would have filled his place in the Expressionist hierarchy. Gauguin, for instance. Or Munch of Norway, or Ensor of Belgium. And without these, Expressionism would still have flourished, looking for precedent, if it felt it wanted precedent, to painters of remoter times, to El Greco, perhaps, or to Grünewald.

But it is precisely this want of necessity for formal sequence that is significant and characteristic of Expressionism. It stands for anarchy in art; its avowed aim is the unfettered expression of individual passions and of things private and inward, for which there can be neither objective style nor a treatment arrived at by community of effort. Perhaps the individualistic and Romantic temperament does not permit an awareness that such a style, perfected and ordered by

✪ For the past twenty years, except for an interval during the war, EDGAR LEVY's paintings have been shown in galleries and museums in New York and elsewhere. Mr. Levy had a one-man show early in 1949.

This is the second of three articles on modern painting by Mr. Levy. The first, "The Classical and Romantic Tempers," appeared in the Autumn number. The third, bring matters up to date, will appear in the Spring number.

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many hands, is the very instrument of communication. In any case Expressionism's adoption of the broadest and most unlimited technical equipment—or should we say the most loosely formed and unrefined—signifies its impatience with objective statement and its desire for an extravagant range of freedom for subjective indulgence.

Whether the Expressionist believed that the material outcome of his soul-searching—the finished picture—was of value to the outside world, or whether he painted for himself alone, it is not important to determine. But let us suppose the extreme case of egocentrism —that he worked for his private satisfaction or, as Van Gogh did, to excrete the passions that he could not contain. In either case, by the mere act of painting he is caught up in compromise. The obscure combinations that are himself in an ultimate sense are surely not communicable. But in painting he is committed to transposing elements of these combinations to a level on which his own consciousness—the consciousness that is part and parcel of objective existence—will apprehend them. Therefore he must relate them to objectivity; he must find in them the resonances that are their universal properties, and lo! where has the unique, the sacred, the individualistic, flown? Thus every step the Expressionist takes toward making the content of his work more accessible brings him further from the Romantic ideal and closer to Classical logic. Romanticism is then seen to be a distinctly relative quantity in the history of art. It is for this reason that the older Romantics are less frenetic to our eyes than contemporary ones. Van Gogh, for example, seems almost tame compared to the Expressionists, simply because the passing of time has subdued the idiosyncratic features of his pictures in favor of their more general aspects—those details of color and design that have wider implications.

Something of the same may be said of the Expressionists themselves. The thirty-odd years that have elapsed since their first appearance have enabled us to see more clearly the few compositional and technical aspects they share with Western art as a whole. Within this broad context the Expressionists observed the minimum requirements of technique. Their brushwork was crude, if not brutal; their composition elementary; their color was brash and primary, as Van Gogh's seemed to his contemporaries.

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Reviewing the movement historically, we note that it was anticipated by the group in Paris that around 1905 was derisively christened "Les Fauves," some of whose members were Matisse, Derain, Vlaminck, Dufy and Braque. But it was in Germany three or four years later that the trend assumed the semblance of shape and moment. Consistent with its undisciplined character, Expressionism did not form a single, unified group. Many individuals and organizations are considered to have been party to it. "Die Brücke" and "Der Blaue Reiter" are the two main groups to have contained Expressionist membership. Oskar Kokoschka, Max Pechstein, Ernst Kirchner, Schmidt-Rotluff, Emil Nolde, are perhaps the most well known individuals.

Of these men Emil Nolde was probably closest to the realization of their ideal. In his paintings the impassioned energy of the Romantic soul takes violent and hysterical form. The sense of the demonic is everywhere, and his subjects, their masklike faces barbarously painted and garishly colored, are reminiscent of a weird and savage funerary rite. That the direction of the Expressionists, as well as of many other Romantics, is death-tending and destructive is suggested, not by Nolde alone, but also by those on whom Expressionism has called for spiritual and moral reinforcement: by Van Gogh, by Munch, by Ensor. Perhaps no other Expressionist displays this awful content more openly than Nolde, but it shows itself to a considerable extent in all of them. The fullness of health is not seen here—instead the craggy outlines of the skull are sensed, madness looks out of the eyes, the glow of the flesh is not that of abundance but of fever.

Returning to the technical features of Expressionism and asking with what perplexities it confronts the viewer, we will answer that there are none. Like the art of its great predecessor, Van Gogh, Expressionism does not invent new instrumentalities, but uses those that are already at hand. If we agree to accept its emotional outpouring, we will find its technical basis extremely simple. It employs the most elementary ways of representation, straining and exaggerating them alarmingly, but not in any fundamental manner changing them. It is enough that they be charged with a content they can scarcely hold, which in its frenzied inward drive threatens to overthrow and destroy them altogether. But as long as the Expressionist chooses to

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remain intelligible (and, for all we know, even when he withdraws into incoherence) his techniques mean exactly what they appear to mean on the most primary level, neither more nor less. They are the shrieking and agonized voice of a shrieking and agonized message.

How powerful the urges are that produce such art, how close their appeal to the mind's eye, and how persuasive their beckoning, is attested by the enormous influence Expressionism has had on painting since 1910, an influence that has extended far beyond the places of its inception and has attracted dozens of painters in the United States. In France the tendency reached a zenith of fulfillment in the tortured paintings of Chaim Soutine and the more passively suffering figures of Georges Rouault, whose personal Expressionism preceded the German efflorescence by about five years. Nor has the artist of different temperament, drawn to the discipline and measure of Cubism, always been able to resist these impulses and eliminate an Expressionist fraction from his work. And there are many painters who, attracted in nearly equal degree to both polarities, turn now this way, now the other, or attempt to resolve the conflict within the frame of a single canvas. How much talent has been rendered sterile by this indecisiveness it is impossible to guess, but the effects of the dilemma may be studied in any one of our large group exhibitions. It is not too much to say that most of the problems, technical and conceptual, encountered by the present day artist are subsidiary to this one and will fall into place when once he decides this general question for himself.

To help both the artist and beholder out of this impasse, the nature of Cubism must be better understood and its method more widely available. Primarily, it should be recognized that this technique did not come about to serve the ends of science, literature, decoration, novelty, sensationalism or any claptrap aesthetic or system, but simply as the instrument of plastic sensibility. We have touched upon the term plasticity in a previous article and learnt that the artist attaches a special meaning to it, that of substantiality—the substantiality of visible things. Further inquiry into this subject will exhibit for us how plasticity has become a necessary function in the making of a Classicist art.

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The concept of plasticity is neither new nor very ancient. Though indications of a plastic intent appear in diverse times and places, it may be safely asserted that it has been most peculiarly the property of the Western tradition in painting—the broad sweep that began with Duccio, Cimabue, and above all, with Giotto around the end of the thirteenth century—and has produced great works right into our own time. Before Giotto the muralists and mosaicists who worked under the sway of Byzantium contributed stunning decorations for the adornment of sacred buildings. But gorgeous as these were, their effectiveness was almost totally the result of two aspects of art with which plasticity has no concern: narration and decoration. The first of these has long been a matter of contention with artists and critics, but has finally been relegated to something of a secondary role in aesthetic discussions. If we feel impelled to invoke it—in dealing with Surrealism, for example—we will be justified in assuming that in general a negative attitude toward it is now taken for granted. Decoration, on the other hand, is still a powerful factor in the shaping of art forms and cannot be so lightly dismissed. However, it will be more convenient to postpone further examination of it till we take it up in relation to "Non-Objective" painting, in the later course of this inquiry.

Beginning with Giotto, painting was called upon to undertake a new and vital task. No painter since then has been able to avoid a declaration, in plastic terms and through commission or omission, of his attitude toward the material world. Those who, like Giotto and Classicist artists generally, wished to ally themselves with a point of view that recognized the objective character of this world, found in plasticity a prime method of celebrating its reality. For this reason, I think it profitable that to the two operations of technique already mentioned, a third should be added and the technical function of painting be thought of as threefold: as designed for narration, for decoration, and lastly, for *celebration*.

We have seen that a concern with plasticity was Cézanne's main technical occupation. And we know that his solution of the problems engendered by this concern hinged on the qualities of plane surfaces, on their capacity to fix and control the "solid and durable." It is not surprising that the Expressionists, involved with subjective affairs to

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the point of solipsism, paid little regard to plastic problems. But the Cubists, of quite another turn of mind, seized on Cézanne's discoveries and carried them forward to conclusions of their own.

Their attention concentrated, like Cézanne's, on the plane. After all, this is the ultimate visible unit; points and lines are hypotheses beyond the possibility of sight, and our depictions of them can only be used to indicate or bound. But the plane had such marvellous qualities; it was entrancing what could be done with it! It could be arranged in so many ways, each one as ravishingly plastic as the next. When it overlapped and cast a shadow, it became so tangible that the imagination might slip a finger behind it; when it was shaded skillfully and knowingly, it carried the eye back and forth in a most convincing sense of space. What was more logical, then, than to abstract from the subject one chose to paint, these delightful planes, and to exhibit them in such a way that the substantial nature of the subject became the object of emphasis? This is the central fact of Cubism. It was not part of its intention to destroy the subject or lose sight of its special character (though it was not interested in the merely circumstantial). On the other hand, it did generalize from the subject to the extent of making evident that it shared with a whole class of like subjects the solid quality of reality. It may be objected that this was Giotto's aim too, and Titian's and Ingre's, but that these men never denied the retinal image so bluntly as the Cubists did. However, it should be remembered that even in Cézanne's day the camera had largely freed the painter from the obligation of recording factual images of an instantaneous nature, and had left open the possibility of discovering visual relations that existed independently of the ephemeral. Pursuing this advantage, the Cubists were led to a procedure that has caused much confused explanation, but which has nevertheless been widely adopted. This is the combination of two or more planes—seen from different angles—into a single pictorial element. It is persistent in Picasso's work where, as often as not, a profile and a full face view combine in a single head. Or, a generally cylindrical object, a wine-glass for instance, is shown with the top as seen from above and the side as seen from eye level. There are variations of this device too numerous to mention, but the two which I have just described are typical instances, and have appeared in

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Cubist and Cubist-influenced painting for forty years or more.

The Cubists went further than this, and for a period, especially in the work of Braque and Picasso, around 1910, produced many pictures in which the planes were quite freely dissociated from their objects and redisposed on the canvas. To believe that these arrangements were arbitrary would be a mistake. The painter was bound by his relation to his subject; planes were chosen for their value in revealing the visual character of the subject and were displayed according to compositional demands of a particularly rigid kind. Consider, for a moment, the requirements such a construction made on its creator. He needed to select those planes from his subject that bore significance in the light of his visual relation to it. He was committed to emphasizing the decisive character of these planes, and therefore felt it necessary to present them in their most unvarying and revealing aspect. That would be frontally, or as nearly frontally as was consistent with the painting area in which they had to be confined. He also wished to show the quality of the subject and its relatedness to the space in which it existed. And this in addition to creating a satisfying and vigorous design, in accord with the tradition of which he knew himself a part. His over-all concern in painting was to communicate the complex of ideas generated by his visual experience, and he was thus constrained to invent a form which he believed held the possibility of such communication. A less arbitrary task or one less bound by considerations of a social nature would be hard to imagine.

After this austere period, which lasted several years and during which Cubism set the basic tenets of its technique, gentler and more playful impulses tempered the Cubist's work. Under the brushes of Picasso, Braque, Leger, Gris, and others in the decade from 1910 to 1920, the mechanisms of Cubism were consolidated and simplified, and witty practices that have had much influence on subsequent art first appeared.

But perhaps the most powerful painting instrument to appear in a new context since Cézanne is one that was adopted mainly by the Cubists and used with particular elegance by Picasso. This instrument is distortion.

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That Picasso was early attracted by distortion is evidenced in pictures he made long before the invention of Cubism. As a very young painter he was strongly drawn to the work of Toulouse-Lautrec, whose sharp and acid vision veered close to caricature. But distortion of the sort that later became so striking a feature of Cubist painting—especially of Picasso's—was first encountered by Picasso and his friends in the form of African Negro fetishes and ceremonial masks, which came to their attention in 1906 or 1907. For two years or more, Picasso's painting reflected his contact with these deeply evocative sculptures. He put this interest aside while he was absorbed in the rigorous technical problems of Cubism, and it was not until these were explored that distortion again became a factor in his work.

To understand the Cubist's (again, particularly Picasso's) use of distortion, it is instructive to turn our attention to the Negro carvings already mentioned. We should note two apparently contrary facts: one, that the distortions are of an extreme nature extensively removed from normal anatomy; and, two, that nevertheless the finest of these figures possess a serenity to stand comparison with the purest manifestations of Classic sculpture.

Distortion of a very different kind is known to us. The Expressionists contorted limbs, heads and bodies in an orgy of destruction. That these distortions are brutal—if not downright sadistic—in their intent is hard to disbelieve in view of the painful reaction they induce. It is, in fact, a truism to connect such words as "tortured," "angry," "hysterical," with Expressionist work.

We may be able to clarify the differentiation between these two kinds of distortion by suggesting a redefinition for that purpose. The distortions in Expressionist art are distortions of degree—we might more correctly call them exaggerations. They seize on and enlarge or otherwise bring into prominence salient facts that already exist. This is like the easily accepted device of caricature. So, in Expressionism, the features that might contribute to the wanted effect were heightened in quite an obvious way. Bony contours, leering mouths, deeply set eye sockets, any gesture or contortion that would add violence, was emphasized. (It must be said that exaggerations are not confined to invidious uses. Italian primitive painters lengthened fingers and limbs to confer an ethereal grace. To convey the idea of

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power, Michelangelo broadened the shoulders and muscular development of the male figure.)

The contrary sort of distortion is one that transmutes an existing thing into something utterly different—a distortion of kind, bearing little or no resemblance to its original. It is possible to consider the animal-headed Egyptian deities as distorted in this way. We need not look far among examples of African Negro art to find figures—many from the Gabun region, for instance—in which the shapes of head and body are changed, not by a process of exaggeration, but by one of transmutation. The treatment of hands in certain modern paintings is another clear case of such distortion.

As we should expect, a great many African Negro pieces are distorted in the exaggerated, Expressionist way, reflecting perhaps cruel and hostile relationships between a tribe and its gods. But on the other side are those Negro sculptures that, though also distorted, are full of dignity and a supreme exaltation. How it is that virtues of high spiritual significance needed to be shown through the medium of such distortion is a subject worthy of much more exhaustive study than our present discussion will permit. It is not enough to say that they arise from an expert use of decorative factors such as symmetry, complexly achieved balance, satisfying curves, or from derivatives of style such as simplification, pose, etc., because their opposite numbers also employ these instruments. Whether the intention of the artist is to extol or to deprecate, when distortions are present in his work we cannot presume them to be unconnected with his aim or simply a matter of decoration.

It must be owned that it is our own mores we impose on these art forms when we distinguish between a distortion that extols and one that deprecates. For all we know, the cruel and (in our terms) hideous distortions were idealizations for the primitive sculptor. He may have admired the qualities they symbolized as much or more than those embodied in figures we find exalting instead of horrifying. The qualities we abhor translate themselves obviously into exaggerations, accenting elements that frighten and subdue. However, all transcendent values called for special treatment when they were to be represented, i.e., they needed to be shown in other than ordinary human forms. Therefore, not only violent but serene forces

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were expressed as distortions, but these latter were distortions in which the human form was qualitatively changed.

The primitive level of this attitude does not need to be labored. More sophisticated Negro peoples made sculptures in which distortion is hardly an ingredient. The great kingdom of Benin produced portrait heads that must have borne close resemblance to their patrician models. But these were a people secure in prosperity and authority; they were in control of outer circumstances to a much greater extent than their fellows.

The other African tribes also had in them the will to personify their ideals and were not to be deterred by hostile environment—by enemies, by disease, by ungrateful nature. So they gave to these ideals the appearance of the human form, distorting its features to place it on a level with the most potent and enduring forces they knew. So much skill, so much conviction, so much deep human feeling did the African Negro bring to this task that his cherished and well-wrought figures are now, many generations later, a lesson to humble our sophistries and a tribute to the greatness of the culture that created them.

But what is their relevance for modern art? How can we imagine our distortions to be as warranted, aesthetically and symbolically, as the Negro's? Psychology affords us an intimation. The unconscious source we call on for the raw material of our art is still as primitive as the African tribes were centuries ago. When immersed in a destructive and hostile climate, it, too, tends to draw strength from forces that would destroy it. The Expressionist, in fact, allies himself with these. But the artist who wishes to construct positive values also finds distortion a powerful and compelling instrument.

Why, it may be asked, is he enjoined from expressing himself in undisguised terms, in terms of regular human characteristics, of a physiognomy undistorted and universally admired? In less troubled times this is certainly possible. Have we, then, reason to feel that a situation now exists that inhibits the free communication of values of a glorified kind? Aside from the negative proof offered by the inanity and banality of official art, we must be cold indeed to every high humanistic impulse if we asserted otherwise. Drives to war, poverty, oppression and suppression are the order of the day. No

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wonder that the artist who undertakes to speak for the people, for humanity, finds in distortion a proper tool, tempered to eloquence by human misery.

In this spirit Picasso, in 1937, painted a great dedicated mural, "Guernica," to commemorate the tragedy suffered by the Spanish people at the hands of fascism. In it there is terror because the scene was terrible, not because the artist's brush brought terror to it. But it is exalted too, because it dispassionately records, above and beyond the horror of the day, the resiliency of man's creative will. Distortion and Cubism are the chief instruments of its effectiveness, and together demonstrate that a Classicist art has again found a way to epic statement.

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Wordsworth and the Spy Hunt

GEORGE W. MEYER

SPY HUNTS initiated by amateurs—whether private citizens, university trustees, or government officials—are apt to yield preposterous results. But sometimes the results are good, though in ways undreamt of by the instigating Dogberrys. I think of William Wordsworth, who died one hundred years ago, D.C.L., Poet Laureate, British to the backbone. In 1797 when he had just begun to write the poetry that would make him famous, England feared a French invasion, and his neighbors thought Wordsworth was a spy. Thanks to the researches of A. J. Eagleston, C.V.O., in the records of the Home Office,* we now know the essential parts of the story. It is a story that amuses, instructs—and terrifies. It helps to account for "Tintern Abbey," one of Wordsworth's best-known poems. I should like to tell it because of late it has

> led me on to feel
> For passions that were not my own, and think
> (At random and imperfectly indeed)
> On man, the heart of man, and human life.

On July 14, 1797, Wordsworth signed an agreement to sublet for one year at a rent of £23 a large country place called Alfoxden owned by a family named St. Albyn. The signature was witnessed by Thomas Poole, a local landowner, liberal and philanthropist. Ac-

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* For the original Home Office letters on which the story of Jones, Mogg, Trickie and Walsh is based, see A. J. Eagleston's "Wordsworth, Coleridge, and the Spy," in *Coleridge: Studies by Several Hands on the Hundredth Anniversary of His Death,* ed. by Edmund Blunden and Earl Griggs (London, 1934), pp. 73-87.

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cording to Dorothy Wordsworth, the situation was ideal. Three miles from Nether Stowey and their new friend, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, and two miles from the Bristol Channel, this, the first home the young Wordsworths had ever had a legal right to call their own, was equipped with a well-stocked garden, birds, deer, sheep, shady walks, and a variety of prospects.

Three days after the lease was signed, the Wordsworths received their first guests, Coleridge and his wife Sara. Characteristically, Coleridge stayed all night, while Sara walked back alone to the Stowey cottage and did the family washing. At nine o'clock on this evening of the seventeenth, her labors were interrupted and the soapsuds ruined by the arrival of John Thelwall. Thelwall spent the night at Stowey. The next morning, between five and six, he and Sara set out for Alfoxden, arriving in time to get Wordsworth and Coleridge out of bed for breakfast.

The Wordsworths had never seen Thelwall before. Neither had the Coleridges. But Citizen John, as he was called, was not altogether unexpected. Coleridge had been corresponding with him for more than a year and had probably been so rash as to suggest that he come to Somersetshire and look for a place to live. Unfortunately Thelwall brought his reputation with him. Actually he was a harmless, kind-hearted man, distinguished in later life as a teacher of elocution who specialized in the correction of stammering. But in 1797 he was known throughout England as an atheist and a political agitator of dangerously radical sympathies. On one occasion, it was reported, he had knifed the foam from a pint of porter, expressing the desire that such might be the fate of all crowned heads. In 1794, along with the notorious Thomas Hardy and Horne Tooke, he had been arrested for sedition, and imprisoned for months in the Tower and later at Newgate. Tried and acquitted amid great popular applause at the Old Bailey, Thelwall denounced the government in public lectures throughout the provinces whenever he was not forcibly prevented by patriotic mobs from speaking. His name alone could disturb the peasantry and gentry of self-respecting rural districts. His appearance at Stowey and Alfoxden terrified the natives and set the stage for one of the most ludicrous chapters in English literary biography.

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Thelwall, Coleridge and Wordsworth each gave a different account of their first day together. Thelwall wrote to his wife immediately. The three of them, he said, "a literary and political triumvirate, passed sentence on the productions and characters of the age, burst forth in poetical flights of enthusiasm, and philosophised our minds into a state of tranquillity, which the leaders of nations might envy, and the residents of cities . . . never know." Coleridge remembered that when he said, "Citizen John, this is a fine place to talk treason in," Thelwall replied, "Nay! Citizen Samuel, it is rather a place to make a man forget that there is any necessity for treason." Wordsworth recalled a less incriminating version of this exchange: ". . . when Coleridge, [Thelwall] and I were seated together upon the turf, on the brink of a stream in the most beautiful part of the most beautiful glen of Alfoxden, Coleridge exclaimed: 'This is a place to reconcile one to all the jarrings and conflicts of the wide world.' 'Nay,' said Thelwall, 'to make one forget them altogether.'" Whichever account is the more accurate, and whether or not it was necessary to talk treason, there were wide eyes and ears at Alfoxden. Citizen John's presence was known, and treason was suspected.

Charlotte Poole recorded the first evidence of local alarm when she wrote in her journal on Sunday, July 23: "We are shocked to hear that Mr. Thelwall has spent some time at Stowey this week with Mr. Coleridge, and consequently with Tom Poole. Alfoxton house is taken by one of the fraternity. . . . To what are we coming?" This question Charlotte might well have asked had she known that it was her cousin Tom who had sponsored Wordsworth as a tenant and secured his rent to the landlord. What was more, Tom on that very Sunday was dining at Alfoxden with the Wordsworths, Thelwall, Coleridge, and nine others of the "fraternity."

The Wordsworths' dinner for fourteen turned out badly. Things got out of hand. Thomas Jones, who occupied a farm building on the grounds at Alfoxden, helped serve at the table. What he saw and heard filled him with dismay: ". . . there was a little Stout Man with dark cropt Hair and wore a White Hat and Glasses . . . who after Dinner got up and talked so loud and was in such a passion that Jones was frightened and did not like to go near them since."

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The little man making the noise under the white hat was of course Citizen John. Jones knew that he was among desperate men and concluded that they must be French spies or conspirators.

Not long after there appeared on the estate one Charles Mogg, a former employee at Alfoxden who had subsequently shifted his headquarters to the Bear Inn, at Hungerford, in Berkshire. Mogg was a one-man telegraph system for the dissemination of loose talk and idiotic surmise. Thomas Jones told Mogg that the Wordsworths were French emigrants who desecrated the Sabbath one week by feeding suspicious characters and profaned it the next by washing and mending clothes all day. Mogg verified this story and built up his picture when he talked with Christopher Trickie and his wife, who lived at the "Dog pound at Alfoxton." The Trickies said these French people were taking plans of all the houses in the neighborhood. They had even inquired whether the brook that ran past the dog pound was navigable to the sea, and when Trickie told them it was not, they examined it, presumably taking soundings, all the way to the coast. Mogg learned, moreover, that these foreigners were making nocturnal excursions out on the Quantock hills, taking with them "Camp Stools" and a "Portfolio in which they enter their observations, which they have been heard to say were almost finished."

This was enough for Mogg. He lit out for Hungerford, a little more than seventy miles distant as the crow flies. On the way he stopped in Bath at the house of a Dr. Lysons. Dr. Lysons' cook had worked at Alfoxden when Mogg was there, and Mogg was eager to pass the word. The date was August 7. The cook went into action. She told the doctor, and before another day was gone he sent a letter to the Duke of Portland, Home Secretary, expressing the belief that "These people [the Wordsworths] may *possibly* be under Agents to some principal at Bristol." No grass grew under the Duke's feet. On the eleventh, three days after the warning from Bath, a government detective, G. Walsh by name, had interviewed Mogg at the Bear in Hungerford and discovered, among other things, that "Mr. Mogg is by no means the most intelligent Man in the World." On the twelfth Walsh received twenty pounds and the following orders hot from Whitehall:

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You will immediately proceed to Alfoxton or its neighborhood yourself, taking care on your arrival so to conduct yourself as to give no cause of suspicion to the Inhabitants of the Mansion house there. You will narrowly watch their proceedings, and observe how they coincide with Mogg's account and that contained in the within letter from Mr. Lysons to the Duke of Portland. . . . You will of course ascertain if you can the names of the persons, and will add their descriptions—and above all you will be careful not to give them any cause for alarm, that if necessary they may be found on the spot. Should they however move you must follow their track and give . . . notice thereof, and of the place to which they have betaken themselves.

Three days later Walsh was filing reports from the Globe in Stowey. He had discovered that the new tenant at Alfoxden was named Wordsworth—a name he believed already known to the Home Office—that Thelwall was gone, that the Wordsworths were not French, and that they and their friends were referred to locally as "those Rascalls from Alfoxton." Walsh himself had come to believe that "this will turn out no French affair, but a mischiefuous gang of disaffected Englishmen," an opinion he regarded as confirmed when he wrote the next day: "The inhabitants of Alfoxton House are a Sett of violent Democrats."

Except for Coleridge's rambling and unverifiable anecdote about "*Spy Nozy*" in the tenth chapter of his *Biographia Literaria*, we know little more about the operations of Walsh, and nothing about the official end of the affair at the Home Office. But the damage had been done. Within a month of their settlement at Alfoxden, the Wordsworths' reputation among the natives had been forever ruined. Outrageous rumors continued to circulate. Years later Joseph Cottle, the Bristol publisher and an occasional visitor at Stowey and Alfoxden, remembered them:

The wiseacres of the village . . . made Mr. W. the subject of their serious conversation. One said that "He had seen him wander about by night, and look strangely at the moon! and then, he roamed over the hills, like a partridge." Another said, "he had heard him mutter, as he walked, in some outlandish brogue, that nobody could understand!" Another said, "It's useless to talk, Thomas, I think he is what people call a 'wise man' [a conjuror]!" Another said, "You are every one of you wrong. I know what he is. We have all met him, tramping away toward the sea. Would any man in his senses, take all that trouble to look at a parcel of water! I think he carries on a snug business in the smuggling line, and, in these journies, is on the look-out for some *wet*

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cargo!" Another very significantly said, "I know that he has got a private still in his cellar, for I once passed his house, at a little better than a hundred yards distance, and I could smell the spirits, as plain as an ashen fagot at Christmas!" Another said, "However that was, he is sure*ly* a desperd French *jacobin, for he is so silent and dark, that no body ever heard him say one* word about politics!"

Time and propinquity helped not at all. Mrs. St. Albyn, the owner of Alfoxden, was aroused, and in September took to task John Bartholomew, the regular tenant who had sublet the mansion to Wordsworth. Thomas Poole interceded for Bartholomew and took full responsibility upon himself. He urged his old acquaintance to "hearken to no calumnies, party spirit, nor to join with any in disturbing one who only wishes to live in tranquillity," and he assured her that Wordsworth was the most preferable of tenants and the most respectable of men, his uncle being "one of the Canons of Windsor." Mrs. St. Albyn was not impressed. Shortly thereafter, Coleridge feared riots and advised Thelwall not to move to the neighborhood. After all, he pointed out, "The aristocrats seem to persecute *even Wordsworth.*" Whether or not it amounted to persecution, the Wordsworths were notified by March 5, 1798, that the house had been let over their heads to someone else, and that they would have to vacate before the end of June. By the twenty-sixth they had said good-by to Alfoxden and started on the road that would lead in a few weeks to the Valley of the Wye and Tintern Abbey.

As to the light this story throws "On man, the heart of man, and human life," private citizens, university trustees, and government officials may draw their own conclusions. The episode is pleasant enough seen at the distance of a century and a half. Who can now suppress a smile at the idea of Wordsworth smuggling rum, operating a still in the cellar, or sketching blueprints for an amphibious French operation in the Bristol Channel? But the affair was not funny to the Wordsworths at the time. Once again they had no home. And to know that you are not wanted, that you the the object of stupid and malicious gossip, that you are accused of disloyalty, and that, however obvious your innocence, nothing you can do will satisfy your enemies: such knowledge has shaken individuals less

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sensitive than William and Dorothy Wordsworth. The Alfoxden rejection accounts in part for Wordsworth's decision to live no more in southern England, where a Westmorland accent could be mistaken for French, but to settle instead where he was born, among the everlasting hills of the English Lakes. And there was a more immediate effect. The rejection put the Wordsworths on the way to Tintern Abbey with unpleasant memories in mind. Wordsworth had not forgotten them when toward the end of his great poem he assured his sister that come what might the world could not hurt them,

> Knowing that Nature never did betray
> The heart that loved her; 'tis her privilege,
> Through all the years of this our life, to lead
> From joy to joy: for she can so inform
> The mind that is within us, so impress
> With quietness and beauty, and so feed
> With lofty thoughts, that neither evil tongues,
> Rash judgements, nor the sneers of selfish men,
> Nor greetings where no kindness is, nor all
> The dreary intercourse of daily life,
> Shall e'er prevail against us, or disturb
> Our cheerful faith, that all which we behold
> Is full of blessings.

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My Grandfather Was an Accessary after the Fact

STEWART H. HOLBROOK

IT WAS NOT until forty years after his death, which occurred in 1900, that I discovered my mother's father to have taken an active and risky part in one of the most celebrated kidnaping cases in nineteenth century America. This was the Charlie Rice (not to be confused with the later Charlie Ross) case; and the victim, or subject, was Charles Allen Thorndike Rice, later editor of the *North American Review*, and at the time of his death American minister to Russia.

I remember my grandfather, who was Edward Amherst Stewart, as the bearded and kindly judge of probate in Newport, Vermont, where I was born. He was a stout pillar of the Congregational church and a half-owner of the *Express & Standard*, then a weekly newspaper. The *Express*, I can imagine, was happy—or at least acquiescent—in the matter of printing its co-owner's contributions. In any case, Judge Stewart wrote a good deal that was published in its columns from about 1860 to the end of the century. My grandmother clipped many of the columns and pasted them into two big scrapbooks which then lay for forty years in a trunk, until excavated in 1940 by my cousin, the Judge's only granddaughter.

The scrapbooks contain what Grandma thought worth preserving of her husband's literary efforts. Among them (on the whole they are well and simply written, without a line of the lurid or flowery prose style of the period) was a series of travel pieces, telling of his trip

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across the continent in the steam cars. (He thought Mr. Pullman charged too much for his berths.) There was a report of his "Remarks before the Pilgrim Society," and a number of stout essays on Slavery and Rum, both of which he bitterly opposed. And then, on October 22, 1889, he came out with a story that sat me up straight, half a century after he wrote it.

The piece begins soberly enough as an obituary of Mr. Rice, "our Minister to Russia," whose recent death, declared my grandfather, was "a mysterious ending to a very checkered career." It mentions Rice's amazingly successful work in making the *North American Review* into the "most distinguished periodical in the United States"; but with those amenities out of the way, my grandfather gets down to the business at hand.

Grandfather was not present at the actual stealing of young Charlie Rice. He came into the case shortly thereafter, when the hue and cry was loud. But Henry Cabot Lodge saw the kidnaping, with his two ten-year-old eyes, and when he got around to *his* memoirs, more than fifty years later, he devoted an entire chapter to the affair. In spite of his long public life, and his eminent role as an American statesman, Senator Lodge patently considered the Rice case one of the outstanding events in which he had played a part. As for Judge Stewart, the Rice affair became second in importance only to the laying of the cornerstone of the First Congregational Church in Newport, Vermont. The accounts of the two men overlap but slightly and, when linked together, form a rather complete and exciting narrative of the greatest abduction case in New England history.

Lodge, as I said, was a witness to the first scene of the drama. "In the summer of 1860," recalled the senior Senator from Massachusetts, in his old age, "I was as usual at Nahant and among my playmates was a boy slightly younger than myself named Charles Allen Thorndike Rice. His father, Henry Rice, and his aunts, Mrs Grant and Mrs. Guild, were all friends of my father and mother. In summer, they lived with their mother, Mrs. Rice, and with the many children of the household I habitually played."

At that time Lodge did not realize the tense situation surrounding young Charlie Rice, but he did know there was something unusual in the family. "Charlie was always accompanied," he remem-

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bered, "by a Negro servant, a powerful man named Jackson, which seemed to me odd, but which in the easy fashion of childhood I accepted without question. As a matter of fact, the Negro was armed, and was there to protect the child. He was always with him except in the house or when the boy was in school. . . ."

The armed and powerful Jackson was actually guarding Charlie against a possible attempt at abduction by his own mother or her agents. The Rices had recently been divorced in Maryland, in itself a scandalous thing in 1860. (The trouble appears to have stemmed from what at a later period was termed incompatibility.) The Maryland court had awarded the child to the father, who not only was a "highly respected merchant of Boston," but also "was derived from an ancient family of Brookfield, Massachusetts." The boy's mother was born Elizabeth Thorndike, "seventh in descent from John Thorndike of Ipswich, Mass., who arrived in America in 1633," and granddaughter of the doughty Captain Israel Thorndike, noted patriot and privateer of Beverly, who left his family an estate probated at one-and-a-half million dollars, no little of which was derived from the China trade.

In that summer of 1860, when Charlie Rice and his father had come to Nahant, the mother, the divorced Mrs. Rice, had attempted to get possession of her son by a writ of habeas corpus. But Chief Justice Bigelow of the Massachusetts supreme court had denied the writ in an elaborate opinion in which he gave custody of the child unconditionally to the father. That, of course, should have made an end of it. But Mrs. Rice was an able and determined woman, as her ex-husband well knew. She was not one to give up easily—hence, the powerful and watchful Jackson.

In Nahant Charlie Rice, nine years old, attended a private school kept by a Mr. Fette. The session lasted a couple of hours in the morning. Lodge, aged ten, did not attend this school, but it was his custom to go to the schoolhouse and wait outside for his playmates to emerge. He was there waiting on Saturday, August 4, which was only three days after Judge Bigelow's decree. Presently his alert eyes noted a buggy, being driven rapidly, which passed the school and went on a few rods to the end of the road. There it turned and started back, slowly, toward the school. Meanwhile, another buggy had stopped

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just before reaching the school. From this conveyance two men got out.

Young Lodge eyed the two men. One was smooth-faced and dark complexioned. The other was older and had reddish hair and beard. The two walked up the street and paused on the corner across from the schoolhouse, where Lodge still sat, mildly interested.

Now the first buggy came up; things began to happen. Out of this buggy leaped a large man, his Dundreary whiskers flying wildly. The two men waiting on the corner rushed to meet him, and all three ran like mad past young Henry Lodge and into the school building. Lodge had little more than time to wonder a bit at these doings when an uproar came from within the building. In another moment, out of the door came the large whiskered fellow, running, with Charlie Rice in his arms and the other two men close behind. After them came bedlam, with Schoolmaster Fette, a large dog, and all of the pupils, shouting, barking, crying.

The large man put young Rice into the buggy, drew the boot over him, leaped in, and lashed the horse. The other two men mounted their buggy and started. It was a clean getaway. "That was the last I saw of Charlie Rice for twenty years," Lodge remarked in his memoirs. He also said that the boy was spirited away to Florida. In this he was mistaken. From this point, so far as what happened to Charlie Rice is concerned, it is my grandfather who is the one and incomparable authority.

Five days after the kidnaping, then, the abducted child, dressed in girl's clothes and accompanied by his mother and two other women, arrived in the hamlet of Stanstead Plain, Province of Quebec. The party had driven in a carriage from Boston up through Vermont and across the boundary into Canada.

The hue and cry was immediate and sizable, for the Rices and Thorndikes were both well-to-do. The kidnaping was little short of a sensation. The press of New England, which had been preoccupied with the darkening shadows of war, dropped the issues of States' rights and abolition, and turned with obvious relief and considerable enthusiasm to the Charlie Rice case. Henry Rice, the boy's father, engaged a small army of professional and amateur agents. He used the telegraph. The sheriffs, police and constables throughout New

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England and New York State were notified to be on the watch.

Rumors filled the papers. And that ineffable portion of the American public which is ever prompt to clutter up and complicate almost any affair in the news did not fail in the Rice case. Little Charlie was reported seen, simultaneously, in various parts of Maine, Massachusetts, Connecticut, Rhode Island, New Hampshire and Vermont; in Troy, Ballston Springs, and Buffalo, New York. It was typical of all such affairs, then and now, that nobody reported seeing the lost boy where he actually was.

In some manner, however, Mr. Henry Rice soon was convinced that his son was in or near Stanstead Plain, Quebec. And to Stanstead Plain now came Mr. Rice's agents, who posed as drummers, drovers and summer visitors. The little village was too warm to suit Mrs. Rice, a most astute woman. Fortunately for her, some friend in Boston had advised her, if need should arise for help, to get in touch with Mr. John Kelley, the leading merchant of Derby Center, Vermont, a mere four miles from Stanstead Plain. She did so, and Mr. Kelley, a native who knew the whole region well, sent a carriage by night to the Canadian village and brought the boy to Derby Center, thus bringing my grandfather, at least three of my great-uncles, and assorted other relatives of mine into the Charlie Rice case.

My grandfather had just married Lucy Jane, sister of John Kelley. He was twenty-six years old. He had been graduated from Brownington Academy, then the chief font of learning in all northern Vermont, and might have been described as the rising young lawyer in junior partnership with the honorable and formidable John L. Edwards, one of the ornaments of the state bar. Young Lawyer Stewart was clerk of the state's House of Representatives. He had, moreover, taken a part in the meetings for Frederick Douglass, and had introduced the noted escaped slave to audiences in Vermont. And now, with his marriage to Lucy Jane Kelley, he was about to play a role in the Affaire Rice.

Mrs. Rice and son had scarcely crossed the international border to John Kelley's house in Derby Center when that village was swarming with the agents of Mr. Rice. These men did not know at which house the child was being hidden, so they began to peer into windows and rap on doors all along the pretty elm-shaded road that was, and

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is, Derby Center's main street. They were not, as Grandfather drily remarked, "well received."

But something had to be done to make the child safer. At eleven o'clock one night, an hour when even the owls in Derby had retired, John Kelley moved child and mother to the farm of Daniel Kelley, a brother, outside the village. For the next six days they remained there unsuspected. On the seventh day, Henry Rice himself, the lad's father, arrived in Derby Center accompanied by more "detectives," one of whom was later said to have been Allan Pinkerton. Village gossips were having a wonderful time of it. Suspicion centered, rightly enough, on John Kelley, the well-known merchant—a man, said a close relative, of much better heart than sound judgment. Mr. Rice's agents were obviously set on watching John Kelley's least move.

On August 20, however, he managed to elude the agents. Late that night a trusted friend drove him to the Kelley farm, John riding in a most cramped position under the buggy seat. They were not followed. Once at the farm, John frittered away no time. "Taking the entire Rice party from Daniel Kelley's house," my grandfather related, "John Kelley fled with them into the woods in a westerly direction." None too soon. Next day, Mr. Rice himself and several of his men "besieged the Daniel Kelley house, certain they were now on the right track. After demonstrating for a while, baffled and angered almost beyond measure, they retired sullenly to their base, in the village hotel." I wish Grandfather had explained what the "demonstration" was like; but I was glad to know that these loathsome people were "sullen" when they retired to their base.

As for the fugitives: "They remained," said my grandfather, "in the woods overnight, and then the two companions of Mrs. Rice—a Mrs. Williams and daughter—who were rather an obstruction than otherwise, returned to the village and so back to Massachusetts. Mrs. Rice and Charlie remained in the woods with John Kelley."

Things were getting desperate. Mr. Rice and his chief agent, who I hope but do not for a moment believe was Allan Pinkerton, had set up around Derby Center what would now be called road-blocks. John Kelley no longer dared to return to the Kelley farmhouse with his charges. He did not even dare to risk coming out of the spruce

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thickets or the maple groves. But he had the advantage of knowing the country extremely well; he was naturally of a stout heart, and he was greatly encouraged, too, by the determination of his charges. "Mrs. Rice was firm and never lost heart, and little Charlie retained his brave spirit."

This was all very well, but soon or late John Kelley had to make up his mind on a better hiding place; the woods were being infiltrated by Mr. Rice's men. At times they were so close that a sneeze or a cough from the fugitives would have ruined everything. John Kelley made up his mind. With a brother, William, to spell him at carrying Charlie, he led the party of four over a densely wooded ridge. "They made their march still westerly," said my grandfather, "in the darkness, the men carrying the boy, Mrs. Rice making her weary way along as best she could, over the rough places and through the low wet lands." It was an all-night march, and next morning they emerged from the forest "on the farm of Mr. Robbins." This move brought still another group of my forebears into the business, for the Robbins and the Stewart families were related.

Mr. Robbins did not enter the dangerous affair without considerable urging. "Leaving the party by a butternut tree," said my grandfather, "John Kelley went to the house to interview Mr. Robbins with the purpose of concealing the woman and child in the house." Mr. Robbins was anything but enthusiastic. What would a hard-working, God-fearing Yankee farmer want of a couple of strangers, outlanders, who had to be *hidden?* Even if he could have known that the child to be hidden was to become minister to the Czar of All the Russias, I doubt that Mr. Robbins would have been moved in the least. He was, as my grandfather said with studied understatement, "distinctly adverse to it." But John Kelley was eloquent, and somehow he managed to get his way. Mrs. Rice and Charlie were at last admitted to the Robbins home.

"From the north room of this house," related my grandfather, "one could see half a mile northerly on the road toward the village, so that if a suspicious person was seen coming, the boy could be concealed between the floor of the north room and the ceiling of the room beneath, which had been so arranged for the purpose." A rug, which I like to think was the same black and red affair that I recall

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seeing in this house and room, was to be spread over that portion of the floor where the boards had been loosened to make little Charlie's hideaway. But I doubt that the lad did more than try out his place of concealment for size. "So well had the matter of the move been kept," Grandfather reported, "that it is doubtful if this house was even suspected of being the place of hiding. Mother and child remained here until the eighth of September."

Meanwhile, Mr. Rice and his agents had been wearing themselves out in the towns of Derby and Brownington, chasing every rumor, blunting their sharp queries on the neolithic character of the natives. And Mrs. Rice sent word by mail (the telegraph was dangerous) to friends in Boston, asking them to charter a ship for a voyage to Europe. The vessel was to proceed to Portland, Maine, and there await further orders.

On the night of September 8, 1860, Grandfather himself actively entered the business. Taking Charlie Rice, he stowed the lad away under the seat of Dr. Carpenter's buggy, with the idea (a good one) that the old country physician would not be suspect by either the local or the imported agents of Mr. Rice. Dr. Carpenter was on the road at all hours, day and night, and was known to almost everybody in Orleans County.

Thus my grandfather, Dr. Carpenter and Charlie Rice set out into the night on what was to be the first lap of the long trip overland to Portland, Maine, some two hundred miles distant. As they pulled out of the Robbins' yard the unsinkable Mrs. Rice gave voice. "Whatever happens," she cried, "don't let them get my boy."

With Mother Rice's indomitable command ringing in their ears, old Dr. Carpenter and Edward Amherst Stewart, Charlie under the seat, drove out of Derby town, through Brownington, through a corner of Barton, and so into the truly wild reaches of Westmore. Along the way the lad was permitted now and then to sit on the seat with the men, and tucked away when any person or vehicle was seen on the road. My grandfather greatly admired the boy. "He was a manly little fellow," said he, "and showed great fortitude in all his trials. Indeed, he exhibited the spirit of a mature person, and never once, so far as I am aware, cowered through all these trying scenes."

Just before reaching the Lake House, an inn on Willoughby Lake,

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my grandfather's expedition was met, as arranged, "by two men who took Charlie off into the woods." Who they were I do not know, but later that same day they put Charlie into a buggy and started on the long and rough journey to the Maine seaport. Mrs. Rice awaited them there, and so did the chartered vessel. I never attempted to check on this ship, and do not know her name or her line. That Mrs. Rice should have chartered a ship, however, seems well within the realm of probability. She was a strong-willed woman, and the great fortune of Captain Israel Thorndike, her grandfather, was still in a healthy condition. Whatever the ship, mother and son boarded her and sailed away to Germany. Just before leaving, my grandfather recalled, Mrs. Rice wrote to John Kelley to say thank you, as well she should. "A million dollars," she wrote, "could not repay the Kelleys and the Stewarts for what they have done for me."

While these events were transpiring in northern New England, the Charlie Rice case was churning Boston and much of the Bay State into something of a frenzy, and young Henry Cabot Lodge was having a glorious time. "A few days after the abduction," he wrote in his memoirs, "my father took me to Boston and the Charles Street jail, where we were met by Mr. Henry Rice and many police officers." A man who appeared to be "the chief of detectives" told young Lodge to walk around the whole gallery of cells, to peer into each cell, and if he saw any of the kidnapers, to point them out. "I did as bidden," Lodge remembered, "looking into some forty cells and some very evil faces. At one cell I stopped, and called the officer. 'That is the man who took Charlie,' I said. It was the big man, who had now shaved his moustache and Dundreary whiskers. His name was Nickerson, a livery stable keeper."

Lodge learned later that Nickerson had been employed by Mrs. Rice and her mother to abduct the boy. The reddish-haired member of the gang, a hack driver named Smith, was later arrested and identified by Mr. Fette, the Nahant schoolmaster. The third man was never caught.

When Nickerson had been identified, the chief detective took young Lodge aside. "Now," said he, "you are to be my little boy. We

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are going out to buy some kite string, and I want you to look well at the young man who sells it to us and tell me if you saw him at Nahant."

Lodge was almost delirious with joy at being able to play detective in real life with a real officer. The two went to a store. The kite string was bought, and when they had left the shop Lodge proudly told the officer that the suspected young man was not one of the bad fellows of Nahant. The officer, Lodge recalled, was obviously disappointed, but he was also pleased that the lad would not lie, or let imagination run away with him.

Almost a year after the kidnaping, the case against Nickerson and Smith came up for trial in Lawrence, and young Lodge was there to act as star witness. He said in later years that he had never again been quite so frightened of standing up in front of a crowd. But he acquitted himself admirably, as he remembered it, and told his story in a simple manner that appealed to the judge, the jury, and in fact everybody except the defendants and their attorneys. The verdict was guilty. The judge sentenced Nickerson and Smith each to seven years in the penitentiary. They were bailed out promptly by Mrs. Rice's mother, and while free, skipped to Canada, where, so far as is known, they lived ever after.

Mr. Lodge, Senior, was pleased with the manner in which his son had conducted himself throughout the trial, and vowed that the lad should have a fine watch. "In due course," said Henry Cabot Lodge, "I received my watch, an English Frodsham with a hunting case, and which has my name and the date of the trial engraved on the inside. I began to carry it when eighteen years old and have worn it ever since. Mr. Rice gave me a seal ring . . . . I felt very wealthy, too, because of the witness fees I received. They represented to me untold wealth . . . ."

Mrs. Rice and Charlie settled down in Germany, where the mother presently married one of her son's tutors, Dr. Frederick Koffer, "an excellent scholar of Darmstadt." Charlie was sent across the Channel for schooling at Oxford and—said his friend Lloyd Bryce—"took the highest possible degrees in the shortest possible time." After gradu-

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ation, young Rice returned to New York, where for a time he attended Columbia Law School.

His mother's family continued wealthy, and in 1876 he bought the *North American Review* of Boston, an ancient, stodgy and moribund quarterly hitherto read almost only by its distinguished contributors. He moved the magazine to New York. He announced his plan to make of it "an arena wherein any man having something valuable to say could be heard." He brought it out as a monthly; and almost at once it began to have something valuable to say. Rice had a fascinating personality, which he used to prevail upon the great and near great to write for his *Review*. He himself suggested the subjects to the authors he considered fittest to discuss them. During the next few years the magazine's pages burgeoned with Gladstone, Huxley, Renan, Emerson, Parkman, Froude, De Lesseps, Oliver Wendell Holmes; with Robert G. Ingersoll, Wade Hampton, and nearly all of the surviving generals of the Civil War. The *Review* was an unqualified success in the monthly field. It may well have been the most influential periodical in the country.

The *Review's* right to durable fame, however, rested upon the greatest mystery in American literature. This appeared, in 1879, as a series of anonymous articles entitled "The Diary of a Public Man," allegedly written during the Secession Winter of 1860-61, but long withheld from publication (explained Editor Rice) to avoid hurting the feelings of people who still lived. But now, almost two decades later, publication could do no harm. The "Diary" was easily the literary sensation of 1879. It also began to trouble the sleep of historians. Who was he, this high-placed man who revealed secrets which, if known at the time, might well have wrecked either the Union cause, or that of the Confederacy, or both? The Public Man's identity, despite all pressure on Editor Rice, remained closely guarded; from that day to this there has never been a leak.

Whoever he was, Public Man got around, and his "Diary" has been termed, by the often austere *Dictionary of American Biography*, "perhaps the most vivid contemporaneous picture of the secession winter at Washington." Public Man describes meetings with Lincoln alone, and with his Cabinet. Two well-known Lincoln anecdotes have no other source. Public Man quotes Southern senators as

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babbling to him, out of turn; of Northern senators talking to him with a frankness that is shocking, speaking of grave matters. Indeed, many implications in the "Diary" were so serious that more than a few scholars attempted to discredit it entirely. But they were unable to find so much as a single flaw. After all, Editor Rice had declared the account genuine.

Over the years, this or that expert on the period came forth with theories as to Public Man's identity. Among the names suggested were those of John Van Buren, the brilliant son of a former president; Amos Kendall, a former postmaster-general; Henry Wikoff, a journalist-politician of singular talents; Thurlow Weed, the noted editor and political boss; and some half a dozen others. Bernard De Voto suggested the "Diary" may have been concocted by Editor Rice himself.

Meanwhile, scholars drew on the "Diary" as an authentic source. Ida Tarbell accepted it as genuine. So did Carl Sandburg, and a host of other writers on Lincoln, including Burton J. Hendrick and James G. Randall. Interest in it increased steadily with the years, and in 1945 it appeared in book form, with notes by the distinguished Lincolnist, F. Lauriston Bullard. A year later it came out in a popular edition from Rutgers University Press.

Then, late in 1948, Dr. Frank Maloy Anderson, a professor of history at Dartmouth College and the University of Minnesota, published through the latter's press, a study entitled *The Mystery of "A Public Man."* For thirty-five years Dr. Anderson had been pursuing the anonymous author of the "Diary," and had performed what surely is a piece of literary detective work with few parallels. The Public Man, says he, was none other than Sam Ward, the witty, learned and competent financier, author and lobbyist, who happened also to be the brother of Julia Ward Howe. Dr. Anderson's account of how he eliminated, one after the other, the many suspects in the case, and his marshalling of evidence in support of the Ward thesis, are as fascinating as anything in fiction. Scholars specializing in Lincoln or the Civil War, who for seventy years have been using Public Man as a "source," will be hard put to disprove Dr. Anderson's evidence.

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As for Charlie Rice, he lived another decade after publishing the "Dairy," and grew into a personage of the first rank. In 1889 President Harrison appointed him minister to Russia, the youngest American since John Quincy Adams to receive a mission of such importance. On the eve of his departure for St. Petersburg, Minister Rice died, quite suddenly, in New York. Nor was he permitted to pass quietly. Newspapers were quick to rumor there was something "unusual," even "mysterious" in his "unexpected" death. The rumors grew into tales so fantastic that Dr. E. L. Keyes, one of the battery of physicians who attended Rice, felt need to make a public and rather elaborate statement of the cause of death. This is filled with medical jargon, and all a layman can make of it is that Mr. Rice seems to have died of "congestion of the lungs."

Prominent men began writing letters to the papers, discussing Rice less, it seems to me, than the comparative merits of Rice's mother and father—often with no little heat. The kidnaping of twenty-nine years before is mentioned in all of the letters. George Ticknor Curtis, the lawyer and writer, for instance, rehashed the abduction, committing several errors in the process, and stood staunchly for Rice's father, bitterly against the mother. (This favoring of the father was almost the rule in Boston, according to F. Lauriston Bullard, who believes that the mother was "a self-willed, high tempered, and perhaps spoiled child.") An anonymous writer in the New York *Times* took Mother Rice's part, indicating that she left her husband because "she feared violence." My grandfather clipped these and other letters on the subject, and Grandmother faithfully pasted them into the scrapbooks (between blasts against Rum by Grandpa), where they seem alive, almost contemporary, compared to the quaintness of Grandpa's prose in favor of what he called "Temperance with a capital."

I am not certain of Grandfather's opinion of the man at the time of Charlie Rice's death. I know he had read "The Diary of a Public Man," but he did not comment on it. In the Rice essay he referred to "Our Minister to Russia" as "having had a very checkered career"; but that, from Grandpa, probably meant only that Rice had lived in many different places and had had experiences that seemed most unusual, if not downright esoteric, to a lifelong resident of Orleans

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County, Vermont. And in the same essay, grandfather paid tribute to Rice the boy, the "manly little fellow" who "never once cowered through all these trying scenes."

In any case, I am happy that Henry Cabot Lodge was not hanging around in Derby Center, Vermont, in that hectic late summer and early autumn of 1860. Lodge the youth was a veritable Nicholas Carter, and might well have been equal to the task of putting my grandfather and at least three of my great-uncles, to say nothing of the related and also incriminated Mr. Robbins, into prison as accessaries after the fact—which indeed they were.

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Bells In the City

EVE TRIEM

When did you hear the bells, their voyaging voices
Loosened from a tower-top cage of muezzin-arches,
Like golden hair for anyone to climb?

Bells of this town have trudged like worn-out horses
To drag their loads of time along a way of stones,
Their clapping for the hour like a clop of tired hooves.

It was no time of festival, nor of fear:
Only a winter night, a snow-wind bringing
Silence to doorways . . . But you heard the bells.

A fall of snow-flakes, a flight of Luna-moths
Rushing every street lamp . . . Then you heard the heart-quaking
carillon,
The stamp of golden feet, then the swift, unbraiding fall.

You climbed, as for Rapunzel, to the top . . .

There is anguish in your face—what did you lose
That your finger-tips stained with strange resins follow
Dropped curves (of dome or bell or breast)
Humming with sound after the swing has stopped?

There at the top of sound, the Rapunzel-country,
What did you touch, before you cried and fell?

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There Is Something New To Tell

EVE TRIEM

There is something new to tell . . .

My world of rain and the sleep of stones
Changes to be the valley of the west wind
Where I may go now, in holiday,
Saying to the catbird's cousin, the thrasher,
"*He* has been my friend
Since the birth of fire plunged Antares new into the night . . ."

I carry my love like a brimmed bowl of wine,
Careful not to spill it by look or gesture,
Remembering for whom I carry that wild-berry savor.

O, at the end of time, at the core of timelessness—
You fox-colored bird, you, flying faster then,
And clutching stars for fireflies into your song—
You will guide your wings by ours.

There will be something new to tell:

The thrill of that wine to a throat
Made dusty by dying!

He will wear a coat of a hundred suns like Vega,
He will shine like Antares
Upon my lifted mouth.

✪ EVE TRIEM's poems have appeared in *Poetry*, the *Yale Review*, the New York *Times*, *Voices*, the *Tiger's Eye*, the *Quarterly Review of Literature*, *Epoch*, *Kavita* (India) and THE AMERICAN SCHOLAR. Her first book of poems was *Parade of Doves*.

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The Human Factor in Our Civilization

WATSON DAVIS

WE "REMAKE THE WORLD" closer and closer to perfection in the material aspects of our living; the crucial imperfections in society are today, as ever, in the human mind.

To be sure, we are not unfertile in finding an alibi: the relatively small amount of knowledge we have of the precise workings of the mind compared to our knowledge of most other natural phenomena —the weather, the pangs of hunger, the tides of the sea, the urge of sex.

To send an atomic bomb to the face of the moon would probably be a comparatively easy task—given the time and motivation, the material and money, the scientists and engineers. It may prove far more difficult not to send bombs to the other side of the earth—where Russians, too, have A or H bombs, and may be wondering whether they can find some way to avoid using them. In technology, in industry, in medicine, there is high confidence that whatever we desire can be done—provided it is scientifically possible. Food enough for all? A television set in every room? The virtual extinction of tuberculosis and venereal diseases? Yes, all of this and more, provided only that we have the will, and will pay the price in controls of people and dollars.

But the mind en masse often seems to possess little of the logic so fruitful in scientific work. Socially and politically, many devious paths have been taken—through wars and depressions—to arrive at goals that seem completely obvious when focused by the hindsight of history. Tradition and hereditary authority do their part in blocking a straight line of progress for civilization. The past is full of long-standing misconceptions—many later admitted to be false, some still persisting today. Fortunately, what is "truth" to the human

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mind is subject to change; but, unlike railroad officials, our minds require notice far in advance before such change can become effective.

We can take the mind to task in this way with a confidence, implicit in our democracy, that human beings allowed to know or discover the facts will eventually arrive at correct answers—an hypothesis perhaps not yet completely tested or proved. Our great atomic crisis may put it to the test, for both civilization and democracy are now on trial.

However, many of our experts on human nature believe that logical thought based on ascertained fact does not control human behavior. This may be just as well, of course. For we never know all the facts, and we never think with complete logic. Conscious thought is a powerful process, but the unconscious summation of experience that enters into our decisions is more controlling; one does not have to undergo psychoanalysis to realize that. Our personal summations of human experience drive our actions in any situation; they are composed of a medley of rationality and emotion. The motivations of each of us are compounded of intellectual drives and the deeper-seated influences that are part of our social background.

A collective mind or entity emerges from the interplay of these individual personalities and mentalities. Under our democratic system (which we fervently hope will some day encompass the earth), this mass personality has more chance of "changing its mind" as circumstances direct, than it has under a dictatorship, where changes are presumably more difficult, and more violent when achieved.

In past ages, the process of change often stretched over a longer period of time. The allegiance to a national ideal, as typified by a line of kings or a crusade, sometimes lasted for hundreds of years. Then, the collective mind was more limited geographically, and one area of the world could ignore other areas with impunity.

So it seems to us, at least, viewing things today with an atom-focused eye. There is, of course, always the chance that we are egocentric victims of the times in which we are immersed. But, at any rate, we cannot today ignore the mass mind of any portion of the world. Those who seem to "think the way we do" politically and philosophically—those on our side of the iron curtain—seem

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to us to present fewer problems for understanding the nature of our world than do the people in the more regimented Communist sphere of influence. We as a people do not seem to have the same viewpoint as those groups dominated by the Soviets. Yet neither within our part of the world nor upon the other side is there complete oneness of thought. There probably arise doubts in the reddest Russian wondering. As for democracy, dissonance is its expected accompaniment. This heterogeneity of the mass mind contains the greatest hope for the future, since successful continuance of the human race depends upon progress. And, for progress, there must be positive change. Science is capable of producing change under control in the plus direction.

There is hope, also, in the redealing of the human genes, generation after generation, by biological reproduction. Death makes room for each such new deal in our civilization. It is fortunate that the intellectual record of organized knowledge is preserved longer than the memory of individual human beings. Indeed, the short span of individual human life makes possible the reinterpretation of past and present facts and their applications; this is the only mechanism of progress.

Despite the wars and plagues of the past, we have usually taken the continuance of civilization for granted. Until now, the murder of civilization itself has seemed remote. But fission or fusion bombs may change the stream of history and slow our branch of human development. Before we accept this as inevitable, however, there should be a major effort to stop the explosion of the fringe wars into world ruin.

The military men and the statesmen have not done too well in bringing peace to a world divided on philosophical and political theory and practice. Peace or war is not the prerogative of the armed brass or the diplomatic set. It is not to be entrusted to the "da" addicts of the Kremlin. Our educational institutions, our professional people, scientists and non-scientists alike, should attempt to keep the bombs from exploding in the future. These forces of greatest realism should be aided, not baited, by the media of distribution of our intelligence —our newspapers, radio, magazines, etc.

We need to know the full truth if there is to be a chance to re-

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solve our difficulties. We know that the fissionable material of the atomic bomb—U-235 or plutonium—must be of a certain mass before it will explode. So long as not enough of it is in one place, there is no sudden release of nuclear energy. Half an atomic bomb is safe. But with the explosive stuff that is contained in books and other idea and fact material, almost the reverse is true. A little knowledge, too many half-truths, or too much shielding by iron or plutonium curtains, sets the scene for disastrous explosions, suspicions and misunderstanding. Hatred, like the neutrons from fissionable material, can cause emotional chain reactions of great violence.

As with the atomic bomb, it is already very, very late to try to stop or control these emotional explosions that set peoples against peoples. The control of the human factor in our civilization constitutes the greatest of the unsolved problems of science.

The scientists and engineers of human emotions and motivations are our psychologists, psychiatrists, anthropologists, sociologists and other scientists of human behavior. We have not asked them to work on this immense problem in the way that we put mathematicians, physicists, chemists and engineers at work on the harnessing of atomic energy. When will a great research program, commensurate with the importance of the problem, be begun? When will our government, with such a stake in this problem, begin such a research activity? When will the people have the necessary insight to demand it?

Minds of men, feelings of masses of peoples, customs of the centuries, the lack of information or misinformation behind and before the iron curtain—these are the ingredients of the impending explosion in international relations that can touch off annihilating atomic energy. When we are sick, it is but human not to want to see the doctor. The world is sick—with fear, anger and desperation—but we flex our nuclear muscles to convince ourselves that we are strong, unafraid, and able to lick anyone who puts up his atomic fists.

The practitioners who treat sick human minds and feelings are modest people, preoccupied with individual human troubles. Only occasionally are they bold enough to prescribe for the world, for they realize the magnitude of the task and the uncertainty of a cure for the disease of impending war. No one high in our government

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is seeking psychological advice upon what may prove the crisis of civilization. Yet all of us have questions to ask the psychologists and the psychiatrists, especially those who have dealt with lives influenced by the ideas and spirit of the Communist-dominated, dictator-ruled part of the world.

Could a hundred H bombs devastating Russia or the U.S.A. bring peace to the world? Would $50,000,000,000 (McMahon's proposal to appease Russia) buy immunity from an atomic arms race? Is it hunger in the stomach or the thirst for security that turns people toward communism, or toward reliance on a dictator? Do cancers of intolerance, prejudice and greed in our own country infest our ability to achieve world peace? How far can the word of a ruler like Stalin be trusted? If the group around Stalin were wiped out, would it change the threat of another world war?

Some of these questions (and everyone can add more) are local and transitory, while others are basic. The diagnosis of the doctors on some of the symptoms may be indefinite, but they may have mental, social or political medicine to suggest that is not available to congressmen, generals and admirals, or to cabinet members.

While the war was still on, before the first atomic bomb was exploded, 2,000 psychologists, agreeing 99.4 per cent, told us about human nature and peace. In the present crisis, some basic principles then presented are pertinent:

War can be avoided. War is not born in men; it is built into men.

In planning for permanent peace, the coming generation should be the primary focus of attention.

Racial, national and group hatreds can, to a considerable degree, be controlled.

The concept of "inferior" groups destroys our chance for a lasting peace.

The root-desires of the common people of all lands are the safest guide to framing a peace.

The trend of human relationships is toward ever wider units of collective security.

The psychologists as long ago as 1945 warned that neglect of

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these basic principles may breed new wars, no matter how well-intentioned our political leaders may be.

The fundamental facts of human motivation are far more important than the data of fission and fusion among the atoms. What makes people and nations explode should be the most non-secret information in the world. It may be important to keep some atomic facts secret, but there is no reason why there should not be the widest distribution of what is known about persuading people to use atomic energy safely for peace, rather than for destruction. The barrier is the resistance of the human mind to understanding itself.

Perhaps, in the face of this perversity, it might be good tactics in this push for peace through human understanding to put the premium of "hard-to-get" upon this vital information. Suppose the Kremlin—or a congressional committee—got the idea that something as powerful as the hydrogen bomb were enfolded in the technicalities of the science of the human mind. Some attention might be focused upon this kind of defensive weapon. But this is admittedly a fantastic approach. The psycho-scientists should be able to suggest a method of arranging for their techniques to penetrate where the Voice of America runs into impossible static, or where the press of any country, free and democratic or otherwise, indulges in one-sided reporting or commentary for presumed patriotic reasons.

If the civilized world does not destroy itself (and we must assume that it will not as we work to prevent world disaster, atomically or psychologically), we must assure the safety of the future through the sound scientific nurturing of our youth. This is the fundamental task of home and school—to teach them to look at facts, including those of their own natures, with a dispassionate and open eye. In a larger sense, it is the objective of the whole process of keeping the human race running. The influence of what has been discovered about the human mind and behavior can have its greatest effect through attention to youth. Hitler, to mention only one dictator and one application of the principle, worked effectively upon youth —to be sure, distorting it to his own uses and working for destructive, not constructive, ends. But we at least saw in action how such a program can be made to work.

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We must gamble that the fundamentally democratic way of life, based upon scientific experience in the broadest sense, will be successful with the rising generation. There is ample evidence that civilization will progress if we can persuade the older ones among us to allow youth to have the new knowledge and new techniques of living. It is our prime task to be sure that the road for civilization ahead is clear psychologically, emotionally and scientifically. The blocks to progress are hidden and subtle, largely within the human mind and emotions.

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Letter from Britain

IAN WILSON

OUR GEOGRAPHY books and the exponents of an environmentalistic theory of behavior tell us that a nation's characteristics are conditioned by the prevailing climate. Englishmen have for long prided themselves on the virtues of their *sang-froid*, that equanimity born between the Gulf Stream and the North Sea fogs, as against the volatile nature of Americans contending with the seasonal extremes of a continental climate. But even within one country the changing weather seems to produce corresponding changes in the outlook of the people. During the prolonged heat-wave of the summer of 1949, for instance, British blood no longer flowed coolly; the heat left us limp and irritable. Excuses rather than reasons were sought, for they were more easily found. The "grouse" season opened well before the appointed twelfth of August. The London dock strike was put down to Government bungling and Communist infiltration in the trade unions; the alarming balance of payments problem was blamed on the American trade recession. Balanced judgments were as much at a premium as iced lemonade.

By contrast, during the summer just past, England was in her element again. We knew of old the sudden showers out of a blue sky, the premature twinge of autumn in the August air. We grumbled, of course, but we knew them and—because we are at heart a conservative people—felt happier, more at ease. There was a return to "normalcy" in our habits, and with it came a more natural response to the call of world events. In spite of the newsprint shortage, most people appear better informed about international affairs than they have been for many years. Certainly there is an awareness, that was lacking in 1939, of what needs to be done, and a willingness

✪ After serving as a captain in the British Army in the Northwest European campaign, IAN WILSON was graduated in classics and philosophy from Oxford in 1947. He now holds a general administrative position with Imperial Chemical Industries Limited.

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to sacrifice some of the benefits of economic recovery that we might have expected, and felt we deserved, after ten years of austerity. This is not to say that overnight the mass of people has experienced a sudden enlightenment. The average British charwoman, if asked what she believed in, would not—as some speaker naïvely claimed—recite the U.N. aims; but she might tell you that it was "abaht time we told them Russians where they get orf," that she wanted peace—but not at any price—and to be left alone to enjoy a normal, happy life. Maybe, after all, the difference is purely verbal.

One of the main obstacles to Anglo-American understanding is the mistaken belief that because we speak the same language and because certain concepts—liberty, democracy and justice—have the same connotations for both peoples, our problems and our reactions are the same, or at least similar. For this, British reticence is largely to blame. There is a popular misconception over here that Americans are boastful. This is scarcely true; but an American does believe in telling the world of anything in which he takes pride, and naturally assumes that the man who keeps silent has nothing to be proud of. We, however, assume that our actions speak for themselves, and then wear an air of injured innocence when we are "misunderstood" abroad.

The first reaction here to the news of the Korean invasion was one of anxiety tempered by the illusion that clearing up the trouble was a matter for the United States ("We saw it through at Dunkirk; now it's the Yanks' turn"). But it was soon realized that we could not stand aloof. Though the papers did not devote the same proportion of space to war news as did American papers, there was a general sympathy for the American position and a growing admiration for their handling of a difficult campaign. To Americans this was obviously not enough. They regarded the war as a United Nations' stand against aggression, and felt that professions of faith by other nations should be matched by contributions in men and materials. It is not enough—though it would be helpful—for us to point out that British troops have been fighting Communist guerillas in Malaya for the past two years; that until recently our expenditure on defense was a larger slice of the national income than it was in America; and that even a slight return to wartime production will

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disturb our economy more profoundly than the greater switch-over will upset American industrial conditions. The immediate need was an effective, self-contained expeditionary force. That has been satisfied; but there remains a still greater need for more "showmanship," however distasteful it may seem to our national reticence, in our relations with America.

The entry of a Socialist government on the British political stage revealed another difference in outlook. The twin American traditions of antipathy to federal "intervention" and a puritanical belief that a man's worldly failure is the result of his own defects, and therefore not a matter of social responsibility, have made the idea of socialism anathema to most Americans. In this country, on the other hand, our political history has been that of a strong and developing central government, reaching its climax in 1940, when in a few hours the Churchill coalition was authorized by Parliament to exercise an almost complete control over the life and property of every citizen. Today the major problem in political theory is a clear definition of the relationship between the individual and the state, and the delineation of the proper sphere of government. In their approach to this problem the three major parties must, if they are to capture the electorate, be governed by the political judgment of the British public, which has a reputation for hustling reactionaries and moderating revolutionaries. After the silent revolution of the last five years there is a widespread desire for consolidation and retrenchment. In such a situation the parties have little room to maneuver, and there is an essential similarity between their programs. There is no question of either Conservatives or Liberals preaching the abolition of the Welfare State, or the return of nationalized industries to private enterprise. To do so would be to commit political suicide.

Present conditions likewise force on the Labor party the need to review its principles. It began as a party of protest against social injustice, and if it ever forgets the spirit of its early days it will wither as a political force. In the past it has won for itself the devotion of many thinkers and workers by combining an idealism that fired their imagination with a realism in its approach to practical problems. It may now find it difficult to keep alive that inspiration

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during the period of consolidation that the mood of the country and its own administrative experiences demand. The Party leaders must determine how best to preserve that former spirit in a changed world that their movement has done so much to change, both in the new economic forces now operating and in the shifts of wealth and political power.

The era of national prosperity following the Industrial Revolution did not touch all alike; indeed the same movement that created new wealth also bequeathed a legacy of squalor, misery and inequality. During the last century much has been done to alleviate or redress the most palpable wrongs, and the force of the original crusade of reform has been spent. Though all is not yet well, Labor must recognize that the purely leveling process by the transfer of wealth gives diminishing returns, and seek to improve the workers' standard of living by a further increase in wealth. In the absence of new sources of power, such as led to the Industrial Revolution, this increase must come from the "managerial revolution's" greater productivity. Labor's task must be to stimulate this trend by its economic and social policy, and to ensure an equitable distribution of the new abundance. In this process it can, now that it is well established, afford to be less rigid in its policy, less suspicious of the "citadels of capitalism" from which the reactionaries' counterattack on the new socialist economy was supposed to come. Thus, nationalization must be regarded less as a political theory, more as a tool to assist in the production of new wealth; nor should it be used to the exclusion of the other forms of public control recommended by Conservatives and trade unions.

In short, what will weigh most with electors—especially the "middle-class" voters, many of whom have been put off Labor more by inefficient administration than by its radical program—is a policy which reveals flexibility of mind and awareness of the country's real problems. There are hopeful signs that such a policy will appear. The more moderate outlook of Mr. Morrison ("Socialism is the assertion of social responsibility for matters which are properly of social concern") is in the ascendant over the left-wing views of Mr. Bevan and Dr. Dalton. Mr. Morgan Phillips, the Party secretary, is at pains to point out—and there is historical justification for the

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claim—that the Party owes more to Methodism than Marxism. It is encouraging, too, to note that the exclusive concern with our own immediate problems has been abandoned in the plan for mutual aid "to attack poverty everywhere" after the end of Marshall aid.

Much criticism, especially from the French, has recently been leveled at the British "obstructionist" attitude in the Council of Europe. We have heard explanations of differences of approach to European unity, with the British favoring functional progress (in keeping with our traditional empiricism), and the French eager for an outright constitutional settlement. Less has been said, openly and directly, of the fundamental difference in aims. Ever since Mr. Bevin first sponsored Western union, the French have tended to equate it, at least in intention, with the federation of Europe. It was in fact a much looser conception.

Europe's reaction to the catastrophic depression of the thirties in drawing away from unity to economic nationalism convinced the French that their traditional federal plan was essentially correct. In Britain, however, it was concluded that exclusive nationalism must not be replaced by exclusive regional unions, but by international political and economic agreements on as wide a basis as possible to promote free trade and guard against the violent clashes of autarchic economic systems. Our own position at the center of the Commonwealth and our dependence on world trade naturally inclined us to this view, which has been confirmed since the war by the inability of European countries to maintain economic and defense systems independent of American aid. The framework for international economic organization has been created in the International Monetary Fund, the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, and the charter of the International Trade Organization. So far, however, these institutions have exerted little influence over the course of economic events, and a system of bilateral trade and payments agreements has grown up, inconsistent with the aims of these institutions and of the Marshall Plan.

In such circumstances it is scarcely surprising that the revival of the French project for federation made an instantaneous appeal to the minds of all those—Europeans and Americans—who were disillusioned by the failure to secure economic cooperation in postwar

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reconstruction. It was an embarrassing dilemma for the British Government—for participation in an exclusive European federation, as envisaged in the Schuman plan, would involve a complete *volte face* in British policy. And that no party was prepared to contemplate. Our abstention from the Six-Power Conference did not result from Labor's alleged reluctance to deal with non-socialist governments. Whatever justification such a view might seem to derive from the notorious pamphlet on European unity published by the Party executive is outweighed by evidence of the Government's participation in O.E.E.C., the Brussels Treaty, European Payments Union, and above all, the Atlantic Pact. The British objection to this specific proposal has its roots in the sincere belief, held by many people of varying political denominations, that the correct focus now is on the Atlantic community, and that an exclusive European federation would prove a stumbling block rather than a steppingstone to wider union.

Amid international upheavals and internal readjustments this nation of shopkeepers adopts "business as usual" as its slogan. It has, as in the thirties, revealed at times a willful blindness to events; but also, as in 1940, a determination not to lose our heads in a crisis. Today it signifies both hope and resolve.

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THE NEW CRITICISM

The stenographic record of a discussion held at the home of the Editor on Tuesday evening, August 22, 1950. Present were the following persons:

WILLIAM BARRETT
KENNETH BURKE
MALCOLM COWLEY
ROBERT GORHAM DAVIS
ALLEN TATE
HIRAM HAYDN

Act I

The living room at 94 MacDougal Street. Present and seated are all the participants except Mr. Barrett. The time is eight-thirty in the evening.

MR. HAYDN:[1] In the Winter 1949-1950 issue of THE AMERICAN SCHOLAR, there was published an article by Robert Gorham Davis (who is here tonight), entitled "The New Criticism and the Democratic Tradition."

At a conservative estimate, we received about this article roughly five times as many comments pro and con (I know Mr. Davis won't mind my saying mostly con) as about any other single article during the five years that I have been the editor of the magazine, and it was as a result of the controversy which followed this article and the pleas from many people for a hearing for the other side, or other sides, that we devised this idea of having a group of distinguished critics get together and talk about the whole question of the New Criticism.

It seems to me we might as well begin by just moving around the circle and asking each in turn to make comments, if he will, about the article itself. Mr. Burke, do you want to start off?

MR. BURKE:[2] Well, I wonder whether we could agree on what the two basic principles of the New Criticism would be. It seems to me that Mr. Davis omitted one of them.

You have the question of "hierarchy," and you also have the question of intrinsic

[1] HIRAM HAYDN is the editor of THE AMERICAN SCHOLAR.

[2] KENNETH BURKE teaches the theory and practice of literary criticism at Bennington College. Among his earlier books of criticism are *Permanence and Change* and *Attitudes Toward History*. Mr. Burke is now at work on *A Symbolic of Motives*, the final volume of a trilogy on linguistic analysis.

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criticism, the stress upon the text, the close study of the text.

Now, this second aspect of the issue wasn't discussed at all in the article. I don't know whether you want to consider it here, over and above the actual contents of the article.

MR. HAYDN: I think we should later.

MR. TATE: [3] I would like to ask Mr. Burke what he means by "hierarchy." I think I understand the second point.

MR. BURKE: In the article, Mr. Davis quotes a reference by De Maistre to "original sin, which explains all, and without which one explains nothing"; and he adds that, for De Maistre, "the manifestations and punishment of original sin made the pattern of human history."

Later, when giving the actual terms that he says are typical of this criticism, Mr. Davis lists "authority," "hierarchy," "catholicism," "aristocracy," "tradition," "absolutes," "dogma," "truths."

"Hierarchy" is one of the big terms in his own listing there, and I think rightly so. My feeling is that he is quite correct in bringing out that element; and, later on, I want to show why. I don't think I should start right off this way; but as things develop, I would like to show why I think hierarchy does belong in this criticism, why I think it is a proper term in which to approach literary issues, and how "original sin" can be translated to fit the concerns of criticism, even though I don't believe in original sin from the theological point of view.

In other words, I think that a truly liberal position must be able to translate these words in a way whereby they will be useful for literary purposes in general; but I don't think I can start at this stage by stating what I think that translation should be. In general, the notion is this: I take the stress upon hierarchy to be essential, since it is, in a roundabout way, the recognition of the class motive, or social motive, in literary values. It protects us against such obscuring of class issues as you get in the "Whitman" style of expression, which would seem to represent the opposite attitude.

The doorbell rings. Enter Mr. Barrett. He is introduced by the Editor, who then turns to Mr. Tate.

MR. TATE: I would agree with Mr. Burke that a notion of hierarchy is implicit in the writing of some of the New Critics. I am saying this parenthetically. Perhaps we should first find out who the New Critics are, as well as what the New Criticism is.

The point in Mr. Davis' article that disturbed me was the argument that the New Critics seemed to translate a literary approach to a hierarchy of values, in terms of certain traditions, into a political program—or fascism for America.

I don't think that hierarchy, as Mr. Burke described it, is necessarily related to any existing institutions. We should get into difficulties if we referred the perception of hierarchy in literature to the individual political habits of literary men. For example, I believe that T. S. Eliot votes the Labor ticket in England. One American "New Critic" I know voted last time for Norman Thomas, another for Truman. Yvor Winters has already explained his position in a letter to THE AMERICAN SCHOLAR. The only time I voted in a presidential election, I voted for Franklin D. Roosevelt.

It seems to me that to ask a literary critic in the modern world to find out what critical system is suited to a democratic society is to put him in a party line at once, because nobody knows what criticism is relevant to a democratic society.

I like a lot of free play. I think that people ought to find out the truth, wherever they can. That's all I have to say at this point.

MR. HAYDN: Mr. Cowley?

MR. COWLEY: [4] To continue with a point

[3] Poet and critic, ALLEN TATE is a lecturer at New York University. He is the author of *On the Limits of Poetry* and *Poems 1922-1947*, among other books.

[4] MALCOLM COWLEY is one of the best known contemporary American literary critics. He contributes regularly to various periodicals and has edited or written a large number of books.

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that Mr. Tate has made before in conversation and hasn't yet had time to amplify tonight and that I will steal from him—generally the New Criticism, as I understand it, is a pedagogical development.

MR. TATE: It developed out of a pedagogy.

MR. COWLEY: It developed out of pedagogy first in France—and that was a long time ago. The New Criticism is a very old criticism. I had a brain-and-bellyful of it at the University of Montpellier in 1921. There it was called *explication du texte.*

At that time, the type of criticism that prevailed in academic circles in this country was moderately stupid. It was based essentially on what now seem to us conventional prejudices. You found the moral lesson in a book, and then you criticized the moral lesson; or you could develop from that into various kinds of sociological, biographical and psychological criticism.

In this country it was a new thing for critics to examine a text carefully and then say what it really meant and implied, and how it was put together. For the teaching of English, it was a necessary development, as I discovered when, for the first time, I had a teaching assignment last winter. I had never made a point of explaining texts, and I started by giving the kids the historical background of the literary period I was studying with them and by discussing the question of why writers did what. Then I found that this was an unfruitful method of criticism for the students, because most of them didn't know what the books meant. Within three weeks after I started my course, I found myself plunged direct into *explication du texte*, or the New Criticism. To teach them the art of close reading was the first and final lesson of any value that I could give to the students.

For the lessons it has taught, we cannot praise the New Criticism too highly. What Cleanth Brooks did with Yeats, for example, seems to me permanently valuable, and you could take other examples from John Crowe Ransom and from many others. And it should be added that many of the "New Critics" have borrowed methods from Kenneth Burke which have contributed to explaining the richness of certain texts.

MR. TATE: I agree with that.

MR. COWLEY: But after we have paid our tribute to the New Critics, there is one weakness of theirs that I would like to mention. So far they haven't furnished any criterion of value. They have furnished methods of explaining and of reaffirming, let us say, our enjoyment of texts that most of us love already, but the New Criticism on the whole has been applied to an accepted canon.

Only a few authors are included in the canon. If you turn to the *Kenyon Review* or the *Sewanee Review,* and try to list the authors whose work is discussed in long essays, you find time and again the names of T. S. Eliot, Franz Kafka, William Butler Yeats, James Joyce, Marcel Proust, occasionally André Gide and Thomas Mann, occasionally D. H. Lawrence, often—very often—William Faulkner, sometimes Scott Fitzgerald.

These are great authors, but there are others, whose work is worthy of being discussed, who are silently passed over. If you are going to apply this terrifically refined critical apparatus to only one group of writers, chosen in advance, then some other critic or group of critics is going to take over the functions of discovery and evaluation.

In effect, the New Critics have turned over to the plain journalistic critics the task of finding good writers worth criticizing. After the reputations of authors have been established by others, then—and only then—do they go to work on those authors and deepen our awareness of them. This means that they have surrendered or abnegated a very large part of their duty as critics, and that is the worst charge I feel can be brought against them.

Later I want to talk about the political issue, but let's start with literary criticism.

MR. DAVIS:[5] I agree entirely with what

[5] ROBERT GORHAM DAVIS is an associate professor of English at Smith College and a frequent contributor to the critical reviews, especially to the New York *Times Book Review* and *Partisan Review.*

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Mr. Cowley said about the achievements of the New Criticism as *explication du texte,* and about its tremendous value in raising the quality of literary discussion in classrooms all over the country.

I, myself, for instance, have used the textbooks of Brooks and Warren, and insofar as I have been capable of it, have practiced the New Criticism in the classroom. And although the ideas of Kenneth Burke are too heady, too stimulating, to make it safe to expose even good students to them directly, one can very effectively draw on them for one's own teaching. My article then was not a criticism of the New Criticism insofar as it represents *explication du texte*—analysis of symbols and of symbolic action. My article was frankly a political article, and was concerned with the extent to which the magazines where the New Criticism most frequently appears use a vocabulary that implies a reactionary position in politics and a dogmatic position in theology. I was, therefore, particularly interested in what Mr. Tate said about the voting habits of some of the New Critics and of T. S. Eliot.

This is a point that was brought up by Yvor Winters in his response to my article and, far from refuting what I said, seems to me to support it; that is, I feel that many of the New Critics—and we will have to discuss later on exactly what this term means—in their political and religious lives are democrats and liberals, and act as democrats, as liberals; and in religion I know that many of them are not dogmatic Christians in the orthodox sense.

Mr. Cowley: What's wrong with being a dogmatic Christian and in the orthodox sense?

Mr. Tate: In a democratic society?

Mr. Davis: There is nothing wrong whatsoever. It's this unacknowledged discrepancy—that's what I am concerned with—

Mr. Cowley: Well, what's wrong with the discrepancy?

Mr. Davis (*continuing*):—of using in your criticism the vocabulary of orthodoxy when you are not orthodox yourself.

Mr. Cowley: Eliot, for example, is an orthodox in religion, and surprisingly liberal, a Labor party, not member, but voter, in politics, and I see nothing wrong with that.

Mr. Davis: I know. I am not saying that a dogmatic Christian—

Mr. Tate: I think Mr. Davis is accusing the New Critics of insincerity. I will discuss that later.

Mr. Davis: Yes, of a discrepancy between the public vocabulary and the private attitudes, because the New Critics with whom I have been primarily concerned in this article speak as orthodox, dogmatic traditionalists, yet they are living now and acting in terms of the American egalitarian liberal tradition, and I do find a basic incompatability there.

Mr. Cowley: Mr. Davis, excuse me for interrupting, but do you think that American democratic egalitarianism really has a party line?

Mr. Davis: No.

Mr. Cowley: One which critics can be castigated for, and expelled from the party for deviating from?

Mr. Davis: Not in the least, no. But in some of the articles (and I may have misread them) of Mr. Tate, for instance, there has been a pretty total rejection of the American democratic libertarian tradition—as heresy (he uses the theological term)—and it's the meaning of this that I sought to probe in my article.

Mr. Cowley: Well, Mr. Tate, have you rejected the American egalitarian tradition, or is the American tradition democratic and egalitarian?

Mr. Tate: In the first place, I don't think it is, but I also don't think I have rejected such a tradition. I consider myself a Jeffersonian—with certain reservations—by which I don't mean that one has to be Jeffersonian or any other particular "ian." It seems to me that it is not a rejection of the society in which one lives to find it imperfect. And I think liberalism as a philosophy is pretty well washed up.

That doesn't mean that I am against democracy. If we had time, if it were relevant to this discussion, it might be shown that liberalism in its present state is

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perhaps not a very good support for the democratic society. And finally, I am opposed to all forms of totalitarianism and, therefore, especially opposed to it when it calls itself democracy.

MR. DAVIS: In that sense I agree. I was thinking—perhaps it's not fair to bring up a very old article—but I was thinking of your article, "Four American Poets." You remember that, do you not?

MR. TATE: Yes.

MR. DAVIS: And it showed, as I understood it, the artistic necessity of a total rejection of New England culture—at least, in your discussion of the withdrawal of Emily Dickinson and the expatriation of Henry James.

You said that a man, if he had intelligence, wouldn't break his head against history. He would have to reject it. Then I wondered to what extent you were sympathetic to, or felt the necessity of, that kind of rejection, even now, of the American tradition, as we have been discussing it.

MR. TATE: Well, to my mind, the American tradition is not exclusively Walt Whitman and Emerson. For me, it's Jefferson and John C. Calhoun, and in literature, writers like Hawthorne and James.

MR. DAVIS: I understood that you felt that even Jefferson was a product of the eighteenth century enlightenment, and was not a true Southerner insofar as that was so.

MR. TATE: Yes, there is something in that. He thought an agrarian society made up of noble farmers could survive in this country, and it simply couldn't; I think Calhoun was a much tougher man. He wasn't talking to himself, as Emerson was most of the time.

MR. DAVIS: Mr. Burke?

MR. BURKE: I was coughing—really, because my throat hurts, and so I will clear my throat.

MR. BARRETT:[6] May I interrupt? Don't you think it would be proper at this point to name the New Critics?

MR. BURKE: That list is really given in the article itself. I think in a general way it seems to cover the field. Mr. Davis refers to several anthologies—among them, "I'll Take My Stand" and "Who Owns America?" There is mention of articles in the *New Criterion* and the *American Review;* there is a reference to Ransom's *God Without Thunder.*

Then under authors, you have Allen Tate, Yvor Winters, John Crowe Ransom, G. R. Elliott, Donald Davidson, Norman Foerster, Cleanth Brooks, Mark Van Doren and Austin Warren.

Then we have mentioned the Catholic novels of Graham Greene and Evelyn Waugh and the Anglican-orthodox thrillers of C. S. Lewis, and there is reference to Lionel Trilling, who "made the inadequacy of the liberal imagination the central theme of his influential study of E. M. Forster."

Again, "W. H. Auden in *For the Time Being* imagined Herod a fussy, futile, murderous, self-bemused Liberal, trying to oppose his ideas of reason and progress to the fact of the Incarnation."

Then, finally, there is a reference to T. S. Eliot in *The Idea of a Christian Society.* The way it's put is, "Protestant neo-orthodoxy, as vigorously preached by Reinhold Niebuhr, joined with T. S. Eliot in *The Idea of a Christian Society*, and with anti-Stalinists who still retained their Marxian frame of reference, in identifying liberalism with an 'age of free exploitation which has passed.'"

Well, that is a fair sample of the references I noted.

MR. HAYDN: Well, let me ask a question.

MR. COWLEY: May I interrupt here?

MR. HAYDN: Do you mind if I try to clarify something first? I think Mr. Burke has given us a complete summary of all the names of people and magazines and so forth that are referred to in the article.

Now, let's turn it right back to Mr. Davis for a moment, and ask him if he will explain whether or not he accepts this as a representative list of authors,

[6] Associate editor of *Partisan Review* and assistant professor of philosophy at New York University, WILLIAM BARRETT has written literary criticism for *Partisan Review, Kenyon Review, Atlantic Monthly* and other publications.

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periodicals, books, anthologies, etc., of the New Criticism.

MR. DAVIS: Indeed, no. This includes influences and collateral lines of development.

I would accept as canonical the preface to the glossary of the New Criticism which appeared in *Poetry Magazine* and which received the endorsement of Cleanth Brooks and Allen Tate. That named the official New Critics at the beginning; I also would refer to an article in the *Southern Vanguard*, edited by Allen Tate. What was that called—"The New Criticism and the Southern Tradition" or something of the sort?

Well, at any rate, I would accept the definition of the New Criticism in those two cases as showing what it means in the most advanced academic circles.

MR. COWLEY: If you would read that list, Mr. Davis? Do you have that list from the *Southern Vanguard?*

MR. DAVIS: I haven't it with me now. I had read both those articles before I wrote mine.

MR. COWLEY: Do you know that the list out of your article that Mr. Burke read gives me the strange effect of the list of defendants in one of the Moscow trials? It is an amalgam.

MR. TATE: A composite monster.

MR. DAVIS: That is a charge which has been brought most frequently and against which I am prepared to defend myself.

Do you wish me to do it?

MR. TATE: It seems to me that the list that Mr. Burke read—

MR. HAYDN: In the interests of clarification, let's have the defense right now because it seems clear enough to me that some of these people he was speaking of as New Critics, but that he was speaking of others as tangential, or even conflicting, figures who in this or that instance adopted or expressed attitudes which were characteristic of what he thought of as the New Criticism. And if he is going to make a distinction here, I think it would be very helpful if he would name names and re-define what he means by the New Criticism. Thereby he can eliminate from the picture so enormous an (in Mr. Cowley's term) amalgam.

MR. BARRETT: As Mr. Burke was reading them, I was thinking that the name of Kenneth Burke was not included in the list.

MR. DAVIS: Of course, I don't consider this list representative. It seems to me that the mechanical process of simply taking all the names out of an article and assuming that those names are all identified in the same way with the group which I am principally discussing in the article isn't meaningful at all.

I was concerned with a political attitude implicit in the vocabulary of the New Criticism, and I felt that it had resulted from the very definite position taken by a number of the leading New Critics during the 30's and expressed in the two anthologies which are mentioned here—"I'll Take My Stand," and "'Who Owns America?'"; that many of these terms and formulations came from T. S. Eliot, and even more originally and fundamentally from a key article by T. E. Hulme, defining classicism and romanticism—an article to which Mr. Tate and T. S. Eliot and others have very frequently referred, and which is the opening article, as I remember it, in Robert Stallman's anthology of criticism, which is a kind of bible of the New Criticism.

MR. TATE: Oh, now—

MR. DAVIS: That tradition goes back to Hulme and Eliot and Babbitt with important differences. As I said in my article, some of the reactionary French critics of the nineteenth century—

MR. HAYDN: Excuse me, one moment. Parenthetically, when you say reactionary now, do you mean politically reactionary, or do you mean reactionary in a sense which refers to their position in literary matters?

MR. DAVIS: It's primarily political, but extends beyond that. It's the fundamental conservative reaction of the nineteenth century in France and England against the French Revolution.

MR. TATE: May I ask a question, if it isn't out of order at this stage?

MR. DAVIS: Yes.

MR. TATE: You extend the "reactionary-

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ism" to the literary views of these men. Nevertheless, "reactionary criticism," as it is commonly understood, seems to this day to deny the validity of the work of Pound, Eliot, Joyce, Lawrence and so on. These writers are still the *avant-garde* in contemporary literature, and yet the New Critics base most of their work upon them. Is that reactionary from the literary point of view?

MR. DAVIS: No. As I said, this was a frankly political article, and I was using the term "reactionary" in a political sense or in a broader social sense—in a sense, insofar as I can understand it, in which you yourself at times have used the word to define your own position.

MR. TATE: Writers like Lawrence and Joyce and Kafka (in whom I am not much interested) seem not to believe that man can exhaust his entire nature in the political order; that there has got to be something else—some personal discipline, whether it's religion, or whether it confines itself to the moral level. I think most of these writers would share that point of view. If that's reactionary, I should say that most of these writers are reactionary. But I don't think that it is reactionary. If your notion of the democratic tradition is that man has nothing but political responsibilities, needs no moral and/or religious discipline, then we go over to totalitarianism; and I deny that this is the democratic tradition.

MR. DAVIS: And there I should agree with you. I am talking about the specific rejection of what is now for better or worse the central American tradition by writers like Eliot on the one hand, and Pound on the other.

It's quite obvious that Eliot and Pound in many respects profoundly disagree, but it is also obvious that they both have in one way or another—Pound, by his most unfortunate political action, by his broadcasts on radio; Eliot in a very different way, by his becoming an English citizen—they both have rejected in a certain sense the American tradition.

MR. COWLEY: I thought that the American tradition was a tradition of diversity. I did not think that there was a party line for American democrats to follow, and I thought that if you want to draw a distinction between democracy and totalitarianism, a real distinction should be drawn on the point of the toleration of diversity.

It seems to me that the fundamental mistake of your article was to lay down a party line which American democrats should follow, and in the event of their not following it, be subject to the utmost wrath and even excommunication of the critics.

MR. DAVIS: Well, hardly—

MR. TATE: I can't see why in a democratic society we can't get certain insights, allowing for differences of historical conditions, even from Joseph de Maistre. Now, it happens that I have never read a word of De Maistre and probably never will, but I think that the American past almost forces upon us a kind of eclecticism, unless we are willing to cut Europe out altogether and try to make a go of it with the meager stock of ideas that we have been able to accumulate in our brief history. I don't think this isolationism either necessary or democratic.

MR. HAYDN: You know, it's my guess that there is nobody in the room who would disagree with Mr. Cowley's fundamental point that diversity is the heart of the American tradition, and the heart of the American democratic tradition. However, I have a very strong feeling that this is the same problem that, for instance, Lionel Trilling is concerned with in his most recent book of essays, when, himself a liberal, he pleads for the flexibility which has a vision not confined within strictly defined political and social aims.

This is what you are talking about too, if I understand you. You are concerned with a tolerance for all kinds of points of view, and with an American tradition that expresses the richness and diversity of human experience of every kind. There is a tendency in at least one "liberal tradition" of today to be so shackled by specific (however good) aims based on social, political, egalitarian principles and so forth, that it crystallizes into a *program* leaving out all this richness and diversity that we are talking about.

This is what Mr. Cowley, if I under-

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stand him rightly, means by the party line —this tendency.

MR. COWLEY: Yes, I did mean that.

MR. HAYDN: Now, I have the feeling that every one of you, as I have listened to you tonight, would agree on this point; that the angle of attack that makes the problem again and again is what Mr. Davis really means about these people whom he sees espousing an absolutist or authoritarian orthodoxy or reactionaryism. Does he mean that *they* are opposed thereby to this flexibility and diversity we all approve? We have got to know who *they* are, or we can't get anywhere.

MR. TATE: I am not a Catholic, but I would like to feel that there could be a place where an intelligent Catholic might publish criticism in this country. At the present time in English literary criticism, the *Month*, the magazine published by a group of Catholics, is probably the most useful critical magazine in Britain. I don't say that the Catholic literary critics ought to capture the scene. But why can't an American who happens to be a Catholic espouse an authoritarian tradition in religion and exhibit it for what it's worth, put it into currency and let it take its chances with other points of view? Marxist criticism contributed something to the intellectual life of the 30's. (That's a concession on my part because I detested most of it.)

MR. BURKE: Can I bring in an implication which I think has got to be brought in? We have here, I think, a distinction between a political discussion of matters like hierarchy and this simple matter of analyzing a text, as though those were absolutely unique and separate issues.

I think it can be shown very definitely that the analysis of hierarchy, the approach to a work in terms of hierarchy, is the proper approach to that work even when one is considering it purely from the standpoint of the proper *explication du texte*.

I would want to establish this point, aside from the purely political issue. I would contend that such terms are the proper terms for analyzing a text, in equating hierarchy with pyramidal structure, ordination, progress to a culmination. If you consider the close of Whitman's *Democratic Vistas*, you find—well, let me quote:

"We see, as in the universes of the material cosmos, after meteorological, vegetable, and animal cycles, man at last arises, born through them, to prove them, concentrate them, to turn upon them with wonder and love—to command them, adorn them, and carry them upward into superior realms—so, out of the series of the preceding social and political universes, now arise these States."

Here is my example of a completely hierarchic statement, as Whitman nears the close of this work. Then, just a few lines before the end, we find such expressions as: "Eminent greatness" . . . "live nobly, nobly contribute" . . . "illumined and illuming" . . . "the popular, on which all the superstructures of the future are to permanently rest" and "Divine Mother." You get the same old terms coming through, and I can't analyze anything except in accordance with some concept of ennoblement, of dignification, of divinity.

You may complicate such devices, along lines considered by Empson in his notions of "pastoral": you can get paradoxes whereby the lowly (as judged by one standard) can be distinguished (as judged by another). You can get such complications of hierarchy, but every place I look in literary works, I do find some variant of hierarchical structure.

Now, the strange thing is that I have been up against certain types of criticism (as in the *Partisan Review*) where the critics respond simply to the presence of the word itself. For them, the word "hierarchy" has an absolute meaning, and Mr. Davis rightly questions such absolute response. Once they see such a word, they can't see anything else.

What I am trying to get at is the fact that these terms will give you the proper leads into the analysis of structure, whether you're a liberal or conservative or anything else. A work is built; it culminates—and in such order there will be hierarchal elements. These considerations cut across any flat distinction between a purely political issue and the analysis of texts.

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I have begun to see from how many angles that kind of hierarchic element comes into a work of art. The work is building up to something; or there is division into stages of an evolution, or something of that sort having hierarchic structure in it.

And if a writer would get his hierarchy out of denying hierarchy, well, of course, there is that way, too. There are such twists, and of course Whitman gets some of them in his *Democratic Vistas*.

MR. COWLEY: Kenneth, to interrupt, what connection has this with the New Criticism?

MR. BURKE: Mr. Davis said that the New Criticism favors this word hierarchy. He mentions it in his list of key terms.

MR. COWLEY: You used the word hierarchy, but what other critic uses it in that sense?

MR. BURKE (*reading*): "Over the last two decades, in the journals of the New Criticism, *authority*, *hierarchy*, *catholicism*, *aristocracy*, *tradition*, *absolutes*, *dogma*, *truths* became related terms of honor," and then he has another set which are "terms of rejection and contempt." So, I propose to start from Mr. Davis' own statement. For I think that he is right. I think that this word is basic. And it figures importantly, for instance, in such a writer as Eliot.

MR. COWLEY: It's also a slogan word, of course, for Franco's government.

MR. BURKE: Well, that's the trouble. Because it's a slogan word for one particular type of political situation, some critics can't see anything else in it but that. Yet you can use these terms in a great many other ways. At least, when you are going to analyze works of the past, you have to consider such elements as these, don't you?

MR. DAVIS: Yes.

MR. BURKE: For instance, take Dante. I don't care about Dante's relation to the medieval hierarchy. I know that Dante's whole structure in the *Divine Comedy* is the structure of mounting, going up, up, up. There is some variant of pyramidal thinking in every one of his things—you must analyze them accordingly.

How, then, does this apply to Whitman? Well, once you have a structure of social classes, then you have the conditions for a kind of catharsis out of a statement that denies the distinctions among those classes, or transcends them. For there is tension in such social differences. Hence, there is a very real desire for an ideal affirmation that will be above the differences.

And the *Democratic Vistas* appeals by providing such an ideal affirmation. Whitman nowhere says that he is describing the actual society in which he is living. His attacks on it in its material reality are intense. But he proposes to bring all together, reconciling discordancies, in terms of a unified idea—an idea related to the future. It is a promise.

The next point is this: If you go back to medieval art, you find there a great liking for the pageant. What was the lure of the pageant? Well, I don't know for sure, but my own explanation of it from the standpoint of hierarchy is precisely this: that what the pageant could do was to let you see a whole society marching by, each group affirming its own nature, each class affirming its own nature, each occupational kind being uniquely itself, standing for its own kind, and yet in the total, all working together, affirming the overall purpose or underlying purpose of the totality.

Therefore, you had in a pageant almost a cathartic experience in itself right out there in front of everyone to view, and I think that's the way I would now (I wouldn't have done it in the past, but now, since I have begun to work so completely, so methodically, with hierarchy) treat what I used to call the "Whitmanesque catalogue"—as hierarchical pageantry. Whitman's *Vistas* reveals a procession of classes which he sees in the ideal future, all swinging together as participants in one single underlying purpose. And without the notion of hierarachy I could not hope to analyze Whitman's stylistic tactics accurately. Here seems to me to be the essential appeal in his "prophetic" visions.

There is a long silence.

MR. HAYDN: Something that came to my

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mind as you were talking is this: I am not clear as to whether you think of hierarchy as something which you *find* in the nature of things or in the very order of society, or simply as an order which may be *conceived* and *imposed* upon the nature of things, or upon the social reality, by this or that kind of imagination?

MR. BURKE: I conceive it this way: I think that as soon as you get a highly diversified occupational structure, then you have the conditions for hierarchy—even if there are but a few divisions. Once you have a priesthood, you have the beginning, since the existence of a priesthood is in itself evidence that you have a fairly diversified society. Then, as soon as you get your diversification of occupational classes (out of which comes, of course, the diversification of leisured classes, too), you have what I call the conditions for mystery.

The conditions for mystery prevail when there is communication between different kinds of beings. Not just communication, or difference, but communication across real or imagined differences in kind. Thus, the peasant is a mystery to the king, and the king is a mystery to the peasant.

Then, out of such social mystery can arise notions of divinity, because mystery and the divine are all tied up. Here are the motives that can be diagnosed as original sin. Once you have a laddered society, then, no matter what you are, no matter where you are, you are unsettled. If you are of low status, there is the "accusation" that you are not higher. If you are at the top, there is your false relation to those at the bottom. You have a basic, unresolved tension, because you can't completely communicate with anybody—even relations to one's own group being affected by the "hierarchal psychosis," as we see in the lonely figures of Chekhov.

I take this as being a "normal" situation in society, insofar as man's use of symbols, when carried into the realm of mechanical invention, makes "naturally" for social diversification.

Now, this is just carrying out the thing that we are talking about, or that we were talking about before, from another angle.

MR. HAYDN: The thing that interests me so much about this is that this seems to me in a way to illustrate the thing Mr. Davis discussed in his article—in the sense that, as you talk, I see all this as one man's vision, which doesn't happen to be compatible with my vision of the natural or social order of things at all. Nevertheless, I have respect for it as your vision of things. But implicit within it, whether or not you fully so develop them, I see the potentials of some of the things that Mr. Davis—

MR. DAVIS (*interposing*): I should like to say a little something about that, because Mr. Tate suggested that I didn't believe in diversified society, that I had no room in my sense of the American tradition for Catholics, for instance, when all the time I quite agree with Mr. Tate that the *Commonweal*,* for instance, has much more interesting literary criticism at the present time than the *Nation* or the *New Republic*, and I should like also to disagree with Mr. Cowley's contention that my article was laying down a party line for democracy.

Quite the contrary. The reason I was moved to write this article was because I felt that the quarterly reviews which are most devoted to the New Criticism show little respect for the diversities and possibilities of American life as themes for the imaginative writer, because there seems to be in these reviews, by implication, so complete a rejection of the possibilities of American society as it has now developed.

MR. TATE: I don't know what concrete examples you could produce.

MR. DAVIS: I am thinking, for instance, again of your—

MR. BARRETT (*interposing*): I remember one. A citation from a piece in the *Sewanee Review*—by Robert Heilman, I think. It expressed in an extreme form just what you were attacking. Can you reproduce that?

MR. TATE (*to Mr. Cowley*): This is the time for you to bring up your point.

MR. COWLEY: Oh, yes. That gives me an

*Mr. Tate had cited the *Month* in this connection.

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opportunity to bring up a point which I am very anxious to make, because in reading this article, what impressed me most was the idea that Robert Heilman could have been foolish enough to contend—as Mr. Davis said he contended—that holding liberal-democratic-progressive views with any conviction made one incapable of appreciating imaginative literature at all. He is supposed to have made that statement in the *Sewanee Review* in the Winter issue of 1946-47.

Now, it happens that I keep a file of the *Sewanee Review*, and so I looked up Heilman's article and found something very interesting. In the first place, the article was an answer to the unintelligent and biased criticism of Robert Penn Warren's book, *All the King's Men*. In the second place, one of the most biased and unintelligent reviews of Robert Penn Warren's book had been written by Mr. Davis.

At one point, Mr. Heilman wrote, "But the fact of the matter is this: Why can so few critics read tragedy and what are the implications of this disability of theirs?" But the only statement in the article to which Mr. Davis could possibly refer is this: "The social-topical critics, bound by their inflexibly applied theory of literature, cannot read the individual work." In that statement, Mr. Heilman is correct. He said nothing about liberals. He never even hinted that liberals, if they are sincere in their convictions, cannot read tragedy. He said that social-topical critics—that is, those critics who want to judge each book by a series of social doctrines—cannot read the individual work because they are subjected to their social-topical doctrines.

Now, I have no idea that Mr. Davis deliberately misquoted at that point—

MR. DAVIS (*interposing*): By the way, this was not a quotation. This was my rendering of what I took to be his theme or thesis in his article.

MR. COWLEY: Yes, but in that case, when the rendering goes so far away from Heilman's actual words, you should have quoted his words in a footnote. His actual statement is so reasonable and your rendering of it is so unreasonable that it gives a totally false picture of the whole situation.*

MR. HAYDN (*to Mr. Davis*): It seems to me at this point that he really has you by the heel.

MR. TATE: I have another point. I don't want to let Mr. Davis go.

MR. HAYDN: Now, wait a second. I should interpose something else here in fairness to everyone, and particularly to Mr. Davis.

What Mr. Cowley is saying, it seems to me, is so, but in fairness to Mr. Davis, I should say that he did this article traveling across deserts without reference works. It doesn't alter one bit the validity of what Mr. Cowley said, but it does make this point clear—that there is a great deal of difference between inaccurate and careless statements and malicious ones.

MR. COWLEY: Nobody thinks that Mr. Davis is malicious here, but it was something that should have been checked.

MR. HAYDN: But I would find it hard to draw any other conclusion if you didn't know this extenuating fact.

MR. TATE: I have a similar point to raise. Mr. Davis, in his article, refers to an essay by Maurras in which the word "ontology" was used. Maurras was a Fascist. John Crowe Ransom wrote an essay on poetry in which he used the word ontology. Ergo, John Crowe Ransom is a Fascist.

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*(*Mr. Davis requested the insertion here of the following footnote.*)

Though I agree that my reference to Mr. Heilman's article suggests bias, and should have been supported by a quotation, I find, rereading the Heilman article, that Mr. Cowley himself is not accurate in asserting that Heilman said nothing about liberals, "never even hinted that liberals, if they are sincere in their convictions, cannot read tragedy." What I had specifically in mind was Heilman's comment on Mrs. Trilling: "Even a strong commitment to liberal dogma seems hardly sufficient to explain, in a justly distinguished professional critic of fiction, such gross oversimplification of what a book says." (*Sewanee Review*, Winter, 1947, p. 161.) This seems to me a very strong hint, and its implications are supported by a reference, of similar tone, to the Enlightenment, and by the general historical thesis of the article. On the other hand, I consider many of Heilman's points well taken, including some, but not all, of his criticism of my *Times* review of *All the King's Men*. R.G.D.

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Now, that's Mr. Davis' line of reasoning, and I think it's pretty bad. I would like to submit it for Mr. Davis' reconsideration. As a matter of fact, Ransom's theory of poetry is a pluralistic one. It is not an absolutist theory. If we read Ransom closely, I think that we can in all fairness conclude that he is very much opposed to some tendencies in the criticism of the rest of us to think of poetry as autonomous and absolute. The way in which Ransom's well-known two terms—"structure" and "texture"—are used, would indicate that the two never unite, that you don't get anything in poetry like an "absolute" statement.

MR. DAVIS: That was a point that Mr. Winters also made. In this article I was looking for relationships between vocabulary and attitude.

MR. TATE: Now, the term "ontology" has been used by philosophers for a long time. It's even in Bradley. It's a very respectable term. It need not have any political implications.

MR. DAVIS: Only in the sense that it implies a certain kind of detachment of literature from other activities—an absolutism.

MR. TATE: I think that the term as Ransom uses it simply points to the "substance" of a given poem. Ontology means substance or being. It's a little pedantic in literary criticism, I confess, but many of us use pedantic terms. It looks to me as if you were trying to convict metaphysics, from Aristotle on, of fascism.

MR. BARRETT: It was not my impression that Mr. Davis was accusing Ransom of being a Fascist.

MR. DAVIS: Certainly not.

MR. BARRETT: My feeling about Mr. Davis' article was not that he was dissatisfied with the New Criticism simply because it was a divergence from what we have agreed to call the American political tradition. It seemed to me that it was the uniformity within this divergence that disturbed Mr. Davis—the fact that none of the critics within the canon of the New Criticism seemed to recognize the validity of other points of view, specifically that of liberalism in politics.

MR. TATE: Why should a critic try to be all things at once? I don't think that a critic intensively exploring a certain direction necessarily implies an intolerance of other approaches. Can a critic be the "noble horseman" mounting his charger and riding off in all directions at once? He just can't do it.

MR. BARRETT: I was going to say—well, I mean, it seems to me that the laws of probability would be such that if you had a group of critics in operation, at least one or several would move in a different direction from the others. What apparently led Mr. Davis to write this article was the fact that this normal unevenness didn't appear—at least not in the political direction of individuals in the group—that there seemed to be a strange uniformity in *this* respect, considering other individual differences.

MR. BURKE: He couldn't write the article otherwise. They had to have something in common if he was to have a basis on which to group them.

MR. BARRETT: But it is surprising that this should be the uniformity among the people Mr. Davis mentioned. If one considers them purely as literary critics, one finds them very diverse. For example, I find it very difficult to connect Mr. Tate's criticism (in its method and aims) with Mr. Ransom's—and these two are closer than some of the other New Critics. For that matter, I think we can go back to the question: Who are the New Critics?

MR. HAYDN: Yes, and we are slowly and indirectly getting there.

MR. BARRETT: I really intend a more basic question: Is there such an entity as the New Criticism? If Mr. Tate here is a New Critic and Mr. Burke is a New Critic, I don't really see what they have in common that might be called the New Criticism.

MR. TATE: The only connection is the one that Mr. Cowley brought up. It began as *explication du texte*, and from there people went in many different directions.

MR. COWLEY: The first time I read Cleanth Brooks in the *Southern Review* I thought that I was running into something new in American criticism. I had seen

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something very much like it in French criticism, but it was new in American criticism. It was a close, a very close reading, and I think "close reading" would be a better phrase than New Criticism.

MR. BARRETT: But that doesn't satisfy me. For example, it is not that Mr. Tate doesn't do the close reading, but the main burden of Mr. Tate's critical essays is not to expound a text; Mr. Tate's criticism presupposes a previous digestion of the text. What is common to Mr. Tate's criticism and that of Cleanth Brooks? Or to the work of either and that of R. P. Blackmur?

I think "the New Criticism" exists largely as a term that was convenient for Ransom when he wrote a book with that title.

MR. TATE: I think there is another way of going about this, but it would scarcely look impressive to the public eye. The New Criticism began some twenty-five years ago in this country. Well, what was literary criticism like in the quarterlies then? We had the *Dial* and a few little magazines, and I think these people got together out of a kind of mutual respect. They were seriously *engaged* with literature, and out of that serious engagement certain personal friendships were formed. We all got to know one another. It was inevitable that we became personal friends, with resulting interactions of influence. That's about all the New Criticism comes to.

MR. BARRETT: I would say there have been New Critics, but no such thing as *the* New Criticism.

MR. TATE: I think that's a very good way to put it, and to put an end to the question: What is It?

MR. BARRETT: However, in a certain sense, Ransom has gone beyond this, and his coining of the phrase, "the New Criticism," and his using it, have in a certain degree created this bogus entity which actually operates in the minds of a good many people.

MR. TATE: Certainly the so-called New Critics have been attacked unfairly, as I imagine Mr. Davis has done, and when they are attacked *en masse*, I have an impulse to rush to their defense. But when they are not attacked, I start chipping away at them myself. This is of the essence of the critical activity. I don't think that they constitute a school. And now I would like to go off the record.

Discussion off the record

MR. DAVIS: I would like to ask Mr. Cowley—remembering his remarks about Mr. Heilman's article—I would like to ask him, in view of what I know to be his own social interests, whether he doesn't feel that the New Criticism in the academic quarterlies—insofar as we can define the New Criticism in its emphasis on *explication du texte* and in its very vigorous attacks against the sociological, biographic, psychologic and all the other heresies—that it has tended to make literary attitudes and interests during the 40's too formalistic, too academic? And in turn, whether this hasn't led to an isolation of the critics and the young poets from the problems of an American society and the possibilities of an American society that might create new excitements, might create new imaginative resources, might create a greater richness of literature than we certainly have had in the 40's.

MR. BARRETT: This is the basis of a different attack. I would like to second it.

MR. COWLEY: This reminds me of the famous hypothetical question that was asked in the Hiss case, but which nobody was allowed to answer. However, the answer in this case is, "Yes," and I wish you had directed your article toward exactly that phase of the New Criticism—its effect—

MR. TATE (*interposing*): I would like to talk about that, too.

MR. COWLEY: Its effect, I want to say, on creative writers.

It may terrify them; it may stop them from writing at all, or, if they do write, it may cause them to write according to one of the formulas advanced by whichever New Critic is teaching that year at Princeton or wherever it may be—according to a number of formulas, like a beautiful one followed by Frederick Buechner in his first

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novel, *A Long Day's Dying*. The formula is simply to find a classical myth, tell the myth in the shape of a lecture delivered to Princeton boys, and then restate the myth in contemporary terms, always stepping down the intensity of the myth into mild contemporary equivalents.

If you had written your article along those lines, discussing the sometimes bad effects of the New Criticism on creative writers, I would have been here to endorse it to a tremendously large extent.

MR. TATE: I would too, to a great extent.

MR. COWLEY: And what I don't endorse about your article, Mr. Davis, is the political attack on the New Critics because, good God, we are in an era of bitter reaction now. We all of us feel that we are in an era of reaction. We feel it uneasily and look around for scapegoats.

Well, who can really defend himself? Who is responsible for our present situation? Why, of course, for Mr. Luce it is the long-haired intellectuals, for Robert Hillyer it's the Fellows of the Library of Congress, and for you, who are so vastly more intelligent than these people, it is the New Critics who are to blame.

What nonsense! Fascism is around us. We feel it, but instead of saying that Mr. Luce's magazines have been advocating what are in effect Fascist policies, or that Congress has been passing laws in conflict with American traditions, we blame the New Critics for producing fascism because Charles Maurras has read Joseph de Maistre, T. S. Eliot has read Charles Maurras, and Allen Tate or John Crowe Ransom has read T. S. Eliot—therefore, Allen Tate equals Joseph de Maistre.

MR. DAVIS: On the contrary, Mr. Cowley, that is not what I said. But exactly because this is a period of reaction, I thought it important to examine the vocabulary, the premises and the traditions of those who call themselves reactionaries, who use that word in a positive and programmatic sense, and furthermore, far from making a scapegoat, attacking a minority, I felt that certainly I could question the social attitudes of those who have come to be supreme in the academic world. As the best critics of our period, with the most prestige, certainly they could take this kind of examination.

MR. COWLEY: I can't follow Eliot in perhaps three-quarters of his social thinking, but at least he is a pluralist. He wants to set up several powers in society. For him the state should be counterbalanced by the church, but beyond the church would be other powers, and each profession would have its own standards. The universities would have the authority within their own province, and the result of all these divided and distributed powers would be that if you found life intolerable under one regime, you could move on to another. Now, that is the exact opposite of the Fascist and totalitarian reaction that we get abroad in one sense, and get at home in another sense, as it develops from the avowed effort to save us from totalitarianism.

There is a real danger in your article, Mr. Davis, because it did lay down a democratic party line to follow, and it did say that critics who didn't follow that line were deviationists. I disagree with those critics, but when you call them deviationists, I am for them.

MR. DAVIS: Did I use that word?

MR. COWLEY: Not actually, but in effect you did, and I am for all deviationists.

MR. DAVIS: But when the deviationists represent the majority of the influential writers in the critical reviews, and when the breach between criticism and creativity, between literary ideas and lived social values, grows steadily wider, I think we have a very serious situation—and even though my attempt to raise some of these questions may have seemed inept or unfair, I still think it's a central issue that hasn't been adequately discussed in American cultural controversies recently.

I am, therefore, willing to make myself, so to speak, a sacrifice, admitting the errors in my first approach.

MR. TATE: Now, Mr. Davis, some points in your argument with Mr. Cowley: I will take them in reverse order.

First, you make the point that our poets are pretty completely withdrawn from American society. How you can possibly

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put it that way, I don't know. American society has withdrawn from the poets. There has been a decay in the whole cultural tradition, so that the "public" can no longer read high poetry. I don't think that the poets have changed a great deal. Since they are men, perhaps they have developed certain eccentricities as a result of the withdrawal of the public.

Since the politicians and the clergy, the industrialists, the bankers and the lawyers—since all these groups have failed to save the world, we therefore expect the poor poet to do it. I doubt that he can do it. It's an impossible demand. You are putting an impossible responsibility on the man of letters, and making a scapegoat of him.

Now, the second point is your use of the word "programmatic"—the New Critics have a programmatic tendency to reaction. Isn't it quite legitimate in the chaos of the modern world for inquiring minds to look around in as many directions as possible, into the past, remote past or near past, to see what can be brought to bear upon the present situation? I can't think that this is hostile to democracy. If you rule out everything above the lowest level of "social" existence—rule everything above that out—I think that culture is going to get very, very thin indeed.

MR. DAVIS: I see an inconsistency between your two points. I use the word "programmatic" justly, I think, because the New Agrarians, the writers who got together in the two manifestoes we spoke of, "I'll Take My Stand" and "Who Owns America?"—

MR. TATE: Well, they are not altogether the same as the New Critics. We will have that very clear.

MR. DAVIS: There is a relationship that we will discuss later. They did have a program and even though I disagreed with it, I respected this effort within American society to develop such a program, as long as counter-programs were given an equal hearing.

But it seems to me during the 40's that though influential literary critics have retained the vocabulary of that program—and I call it a program of reaction in a very special sense—they have stopped making an effort to move closer toward the people in terms of any possible American tradition.

I don't understand you, Mr. Tate, to be an historical determinist. I know that the poets cannot solve the problem alone. But, still, they are human beings. They do have will. They do have a need for community, and I think there has been insufficient discussion of this in the quarterly academic reviews, insufficient attempt to close, or at least to bridge, the gap—to find elements in existing American democracy which can be used effectively, imaginatively, creatively.

MR. TATE: What are those elements, as you conceive them, Mr. Davis, that can be used?

MR. DAVIS: The egalitarian democratic effort itself has not—

MR. TATE (*interposing*): What is that? Who is making that effort?

MR. DAVIS: The whole movement of American society has been toward that and with major success. I think, considering past world history, that Americans are remarkably close toward at least economic equality, and also that we have an amazing degree still of individual liberty.

MR. TATE: I agree with that. I don't see why you should suppose that the so-called New Critics oppose all that. I think, Mr. Davis, you are trying to equate us with what I have heard called General Motors conservatives—or was it Western Electric reactionaries?

MR. DAVIS: No, again, on the contrary, I am thinking of your own work—the feeling you used to express that with the Civil War America defeated Europe and European values.

MR. TATE: Yes.

MR. DAVIS: And that a vacuum was left.

MR. TATE: I don't see why that is hostile to the American tradition. In order to have an American tradition, do you have to cut Europe off, the Europe of the past? I think we might do well to cut it off at the present, if it were possible, but that's another problem.

MR. DAVIS: But if I understood you cor-

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rectly, there were no values left for the man of imagination, of letters, no part in the America that triumphed after the Civil War.

MR. TATE: It would be very hard to define them between the Civil War and 1914.

MR. DAVIS: But since then—

MR. TATE (*interposing*): There may be some possibilities.

MR. DAVIS: Well, that's what I feel hasn't been discussed positively enough, creatively enough, in the quarterly reviews.

MR. HAYDN: What are those?

MR. TATE: I am thinking of this as a literary man, not as an evangelist or spokesman for all American society.

MR. HAYDN: Well, just as an individual—

MR. TATE: I think there has been a very distinct gain in literary awareness in the United States—awareness of literature at large, past and present. We have gained greatly in general sophistication in the arts, insight into the arts.

MR. HAYDN: What do you mean by this awareness?

MR. TATE: An awareness of the possibilities of literature. The American writer today has more to draw upon, not only in this country, but in the world at large, than he did before 1914. The whole American literary tradition is widened.

MR. HAYDN: What's the significance of 1914? The usual one?

MR. TATE: The American writer or the American intellectual came in contact with Europe in a very dynamic way for the first time. Americans of all classes, not merely the leisure class who went to Europe in the nineteenth century—well, we all became aware of other civilizations, other cultures, and I think that this largely explains the renaissance that took place in this country between the two wars.

MR. HAYDN: You know, going back to the point you raised a little while ago when you said that, rather than the American poet and literary critic or intellectual deserting American society, it seemed to you that society as a whole had deserted him—it seems to me that there is indeed an increasing and a terribly unhappy rift between any large audience and the kind of poet, the kind of writer that you have been talking about and we have all been talking about. And I can't agree that the defection is one-sided, or even that American society at large initiated the rift. I am sure that many of its members feel that you, and indeed most of the people we have been talking about and still haven't been able to define and identify exactly under the heading of the New Criticism, represent, though perhaps they wouldn't use the term, a kind of Alexandrian tendency and period—a period in which there is a great deal of inbreeding, in which you and your colleagues (obviously, this isn't personal at all; it is just a term) appreciate or seem to appreciate, comprehend or seem to comprend, each other's works; have a great distaste for the large vulgar market place of books, the at least numerically larger world of book publishing, newspaper reviewing, book clubs, and so on—finally, that the more discerning among these observers find a genuinely increasing vulgarization in that larger world and are dissatisfied with it, yet are completely lost in trying to come to grips with the kinds of critics and poets we have been discussing.

I submit as a sort of related angle to this whole problem we are discussing, the fact that there has been a withdrawal on both sides. And I rather think that the poets and intellectuals seceded first. But the vacuum created is what most alarms me.

MR. TATE: I think there has been such a withdrawal, but I think the withdrawal took place first on the part of the general public.

MR. BURKE: Oh, no, Allen. In a highly specialized society, if the mechanic is specialized, then by the same token the poet is too. The same motive, in this sense, runs through the society.

MR. TATE: We are not really disagreeing. I can't and you can't write physics in hexameters. But at the same time, the society as a whole doesn't have a humane—

MR. BURKE (*interposing*): The mechanic, like the poet, has a bunch of "signatures." He can listen to a motor, and he can hear something about that motor that others

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will miss, unless they, too, have a mechanical twist. In *his* area of sensitivity, others are stupid. Where he is "aesthetic," they are "anaesthetic."

MR. HAYDN: You don't know how well that last describes me in relation to a motor.

MR. DAVIS: But he can communicate this sensitivity of his in a certain way to the owner of the car, and the owner of the car can appreciate and feel it.

MR. TATE: I don't think that the owner of the car will appreciate it. He simply gets into the car and drives away.

MR. DAVIS: That is true among the intellectuals.

Discussion off the record

MR. COWLEY: Stephen Spender has a very good review in the current *Commentary* of Lionel Trilling's collection of essays on liberalism. Spender, as the core of his article, divides writers into those who believe in original sin and those who believe in human perfectibility. Those who believe in original sin are the conservatives and those who believe in human perfectibility are the liberals.

MR. DAVIS: That was Hulme's thesis.

MR. HAYDN: Yet there is really a third class.

MR. COWLEY: And he points out why so many authors admired today have seemed to be conservative or even reactionary—that the belief in original sin is much more fruitful in working with individual psychology and is more likely to produce tragic works of art.

On the other hand, he feels that the liberal approach, stressing perfectibility, at least of society, is much more effective in politics, and he wonders whether some combination couldn't be made of the two.

MR. TATE: It was the combination that our friend Dante advocated in the thirteenth century.

MR. BURKE: I have three and a half pages on this subject that I would like to put into the record. They're on this matter of original sin, as I would want to interpret it for my purposes. And they relate "original sin" to considerations of dialectic in general.

MR. HAYDN: Well, we will stay with you.

MR. BURKE: Let us begin with a *purely* dialectical consideration. We recall Socrates on dialectics as the art of generalization and division. These are the two ultimate resources of language. We can have words that put things together. "Furniture," for instance, is not a highly generalized word, but it is sufficiently generalized to include within its realm such words as "table," "chair," "desk." Or, stated the other way, by these words (table, chair, desk) and similar words, the realm covered by the more generalized word "furniture" can be divided into specific realms.

Now, this principle of language also has its analogue with respect to extra-linguistic things. A tree, for instance, has a certain uniqueness of existence and thus can be treated as a particular substance. Or, since it arises and exists only by reason of its relation to the scenic conditions out of which it arises, we could consider it as merely a fragment of a wider totality that would ultimately include "all" as its realm.

Here is the basic opportunity and embarrassment of discourse—that in some respects the specific can be treated as integral to the general (as of the same composition), and in some respects the specific can be treated as distinct from the general.

Applying such resources to statements of policy on biological matters, for instance, we can consider the foetus in the womb either as being benignly at one with its maternal source, or as progressively dividing from its maternal source. (And in the analysis of literary works, I ask my students to be on the watch for the "separating out.")

This basic resource of speech or of the human consciousness, insofar as it involves discursive symbols, is stated abstractly as generalization (composition) and division (specification, a process of distinction that may be carried down to individual particulars).

But again and again in the history of human thought, the vocabularies of motives that prevail at any period do not confine themselves to such an abstract statement of these principles. The principles are trans-

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lated into terms of particular images. The separation of the part from the whole may thus be celebrated as an act of freedom, in bursting the bonds of a confinement; or the same process of division can be expressed in images that have ominous connotations, as the part can be said to rebel against the whole.

Or, if the idea of original unity is associated with conditions of absolute concordancy, then the part's assertion of its individuality can be considered as a "fall" from a higher state of grace—and it can be thought of as forever after seeking to return, like a prodigal son, to the home from which in costly pride (*hubris*) it once self-assertively departed. Or, otherwise put, for a certain length of time the foetus might be said to bask in the womb as in a circle of protection (within the pale, within the walls of the walled town, within the benign *hortus conclusus*).

Or, we may stress the moment when it has outgrown the state that made such conditions ideal for it. At this point, the circle of protection becomes a circle of confinement; a new "separating out" must take place.

The biological change, sometimes called "birth trauma," occurs (though it must also be a kind of relief, since continued existence within the womb would be intolerable); but with the infant feeding happily at the breast, a new state of union between the divided beings, mother and offspring, is now established—until at a later date, further kinds of "separating out" must take place.

I do not by any means agree with the wholly biological emphasis my examples here suggest. Perhaps at some later point in the discussion, I can show more fully wherein the divisiveness that goes with the division of labor and with similar purely social conditions has much more to do with what is called the "birth trauma" than does this purely biological event. As so named, the normality of parturition looks like an abnormality. And "birth trauma" may be a deceptive term that both recognizes the tensions of hierarchy, and conceals their social origin.

But the point I would get at is this: Once you hit upon some particular set of images and state the paradoxes of composition and division in such "local" terms (or, as we would often say now, once you state these resources "mythically"), then you have a kind of vocabulary which allows with equal justice for both De Maistre's formula and the views of his opponents.

In sum: Whether there is or is not original sin, the formula states in imaginal terms a very real paradox about the dialectical relation between composition and division. Hence, if a non-believer tries to attack the formula, without making clear the universal considerations that underlie it, he will automatically vow himself to a half-baked statement of motivation that puts him at a disadvantage.

Obviously, what he should do is begin from a consideration of such resources and embarrassments in general. I have been trying to do so in my own analysis of hierarchy. But this statement has continued too long—and I shall stop now, hoping for a later opportunity to show more specifically how I would relate "original sin" to "hierarchy," and how, in my qualified way, I would hold that the theologians are quite right in insisting upon both as motivational elements.

The point I am getting at is that, as a liberal, you can't simply *attack* "original sin."

You can't attack this whole design of a part separated from the whole, since there is here a perfectly feasible dialectical consideration underlying the mythic statement. What you should consider—

MR. HAYDN: But as a liberal, one of the things that—

MR. BARRETT: That is the doctrine of original sin, Mr. Burke.

MR. HAYDN: Let me have a little preamble before getting back to the point. If you go back to the meaning of "conservative" and "liberal"—certainly within our tradition, anyway—there need not be any basic disagreement between them.

The true conservative, after all, means to preserve not everything, but what is best, according to his lights, of the traditional.

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The true liberal is open to new concepts and to change. The true conservative is just as open (I am not talking in just political terms) because if he is going to preserve only what he finds best in the tradition, he is going to be open to change, too. Similarly, if the liberal is going to be genuinely open, receptive, he is going to be open to the past as well as to what is new.

I want to say, Mr. Burke, that when you set the terms which allow "with equal justice for both De Maistre's formula and the views of his opponents" you clarified much that has had more heat than light expended on it. Yet the objection that I have to some of the people whom I think of as New Critics (and it's interesting that we still haven't said outright who they are) is that they seem to me—I say no more than that—to *defend* "original sin" or "hierarchy" (in your terms) in the very way you deprecate; indeed, to believe that, if one is truly enlightened, one cannot choose another position.

MR. TATE: I draw the line there. The question is whether a man considers certain truths true, and if he does so, whether he states them as unequivocally as possible. It's up to his opponents to state their views. Are all convictions to be watered down in deference to the opposition?

MR. DAVIS: And I would agree entirely with what Mr. Burke said about the meaning of original sin, both imaginatively and as understanding of human experience. But it seems to me very different from Eliot's contention that a living literature depends upon a living tradition, and that a living tradition depends upon dogma, and that dogma in turn depends upon the definitions of the true church—and that we can have salvation socially, culturally, literally and personally only by acceptance of the church.

MR. TATE: I don't think Eliot says that. Where does he say it?

MR. DAVIS: He says it in the bluntest way in a series of lectures called, *After Strange Gods*. He has refined it and explicated it in his later book—*The Idea of a Christian Society*.

That's almost verbatim from it.

MR. TATE: Isn't he saying that Yeats and Lawrence and Joyce have a certain coherence and depth because they were brought up in the Christian tradition? That's what it comes to.

MR. DAVIS: On the contrary, that's the trouble with Lawrence, Eliot says; he was brought up in the Nonconformist chapel. What I was saying was almost a verbatim account of a passage in *After Strange Gods*. I was reading it in class a few days ago. And that was addressed, as a matter of fact, more or less to the Southern Agrarians, you remember.

MR. BURKE: I think you ought to be allowed to put that in as a footnote.

MR. HAYDN: Gentlemen, how would you feel about a brief recess for which I have provided some food and drink, and then having a very short final session in which we will try to pin down two or three things?

MR. BURKE: The only objection is to that *short* final session. I am just getting warmed up.

MR. DAVIS: Couldn't you publish a supplement?

MR. HAYDN: We already have twenty more pages than we can probably find any way to publish. A short recess is declared, and we will hope to hew to the line more closely hereafter.

The remainder of the evening's discussion (Act II) will appear in the Spring number of THE AMERICAN SCHOLAR.

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The Reader Replies

THE READER REPLIES *regularly carries comments by readers on the contents of the preceding American Scholar Forum. In the Spring number, for example,* THE READER REPLIES *will contain letters about the debate in the current number on the subject: "The New Criticism." In addition, miscellaneous letters of comment on various articles appear in this department. All communications should be addressed to: The Editor,* THE AMERICAN SCHOLAR, *415 First Avenue, New York 10, N. Y., and should not exceed 300 words in length, except for comments on the previous Forum, which may run to 500. Because of limitations of space, the editors cannot guarantee to print all communications received. Letters intended for publication in the Spring number should be mailed before December 15.*—EDITOR.

Miscellaneous Comments

The Democratic Limits of the Welfare State

I wish that I could agree with the paper of the distinguished Columbia historian. But unfortunately I am in strong disagreement. I am on Mr. Lerner's side when he contends that the British experience is not greatly relevant for our problems, that a great danger lies in excessive power of large agglomerations of capital, and that much remains to be done to make our country a welfare state of which we may be proud. And Mr. Lindblom quite rightly suggests that how far we go depends on the circumstances.

What of my other disagreements with Mr. Hacker? First, he implies that Great Britain is on the way to becoming a bankrupt state, and apparently because she squanders her resources on health insurance instead of modernization of plant. Even Mr. Lerner concedes too much. The British are far from bankrupt. Their output is 20 per cent in excess of prewar, the explanation in equal part being *rising productivity* and an increase of employment. Surely this spectacular gain is not evidence of the disappearance of incentives; and dollar shortage reflects the excessive part of costs of World War II defrayed by Great Britain. The per capita consumption of the poor has risen by 20 per cent and that of the wealthy has fallen by 40 per cent. This also is an achievement which Mr. Hacker might well applaud since he expressed interest in improved distribution. Nor is bankruptcy the current symptom in Great Britain where, despite the large services contributed by the State, the government operates on a budgetary surplus.

Second, Professor Hacker is fearful that there is no middle way. Yet despite a rise of U. S. national income of close to 200 billion dollars since the early thirties and despite the increased participation of government, all governments in this country in 1949 drained only one sixth of the total

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output of goods and services, as compared with one seventh in the early thirties. We spend less than 5 per cent of our income for welfare services, and these outlays are in large part transfers from young to old, from well to sick, from employed to unemployed. Even Mr. Hacker's grandchildren will be safe from the intrusions of the welfare state at this rate of progress or lack of it. (And this small advance accompanied and followed the greatest depression and war of all times.) The genuine danger is one not mentioned by Mr. Hacker: What may destroy our system is war, not the outlays for welfare.

Third, how can Mr. Hacker, at this late date, contend that private plans can take care of the old, the sick, and the unemployed? Has he forgotten about the thirties already? Does he realize that even with *compulsory* systems, we provide (and most inadequately) about 3 per cent of our national income for these purposes—and a large part of the funds are paid by the beneficiaries? Surely Mr. Hacker must know that the high cost and inefficiency of the friendly societies and private insurance companies in Great Britain contributed greatly to the spread of compulsory insurance. Even the vast majority of the Republicans in our Senate in 1950 supported an extension of compulsory insurance.

Fourth, Professor Hacker is excessively concerned over deficits. As he suggests, the U.S. Government planned for a 5 billion dollar deficit in the midst of unusually prosperous conditions. But this is not a *peace* economy, as Mr. Hacker contends. Even before Korea, approximately 20 billion dollars were going to war and foreign aid. The 5 billion dollar deficit costs 200 million dollars a year, or about 2 per cent of the average *annual* rise of income associated with increased productivity. The entire annual cost of the national debt is but 2 to 3 per cent of the rise of the national income since the days in the early thirties when the welfare state was still a dream. Alexander Hamilton, Mr. Hacker's hero, seemed to understand the contribution of a growing debt much better than his eulogizer. (I refer Professor Hacker to my *National Debt and the New Economics.*)

Fifth, I am surprised that Professor Hacker, an outstanding historian, should help pereptuate the myth that the great business leaders come from modest origins. I can only refer him to Miller's researches published in the *Economic History Review* and in the *Quarterly Journal of Economics.*

In short, Professor Hacker had better have another look at Schlesinger's *Vital Center.*

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The Limits of Intervention

Professor Hacker's lucid discussion of our tendency to substitute a high pressure sense of urgency for essential analysis, as we expand the transfer from individual responsibility to highly subsidized mass provisions, is illustrated by the "putting across" of more "social security."

Fabian gradualism, whether in England or here, leads—and is intended to lead—to more intervention. The International Labour Office, in a slender volume "Postwar Trends in Social Security," notes that an "increasing proportion of total wages goes for Social Security." They say the percentage for "income security" is 25 per cent in Belgium, 34.5 per cent in France, 22.8 per cent in Czechoslovakia, 28 per cent in Yugoslavia. "Medical Care" takes 4 per cent in England and in New Zealand. Such federal "take" is too much for a free economy to contemplate. These nations have passed the wise limits. The young and ambitious seek to leave England and New Zealand. Totalitarianism is the label for Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia. France in a hundred years has been inept at collecting imposed taxes.

Public Law #734 (the Social Security Amendments of 1950), to be brutally frank, is discriminatory, inept, a discouragement to thrift and a sacrifice of fiscal integrity. The beneficiaries of "insurance" and "as-

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sistance," two aspects of relief and heavy subsidy, can perhaps, in the aggregate, claim to have paid one or two cents of contributions against the dollar of lifetime benefit.

We do need in this one area clearer definition, more understanding, strict limitations on the intervention of the state in personal responsibilities.

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The Shock of Aging

In his excellent article on "The Shock of Aging," Dr. Gumpert throws open for general public thought the timeless problem of longevity, a problem which has suddenly become acute in a century and country characterized by an accelerated tempo of living and a singular lack of reflective thinking. With the conscience of a medical man, he avoids a philosophical approach to the problem and suggests that scientific investigation of human adaptation to sickness and senility is in order. But should the white light of scientific scrutiny be turned upon the chronically ill, the disabled, the old, or upon our society as a whole? What is lacking in the spiritual basis of our civilization, crowned as it is with technological achievements, that old age is a shock? I am reminded of a passage in the Dhammapada which reflects the serenity of a former time:

> Looking for the maker of this tabernacle, I have run through a course of many births, not finding him; and painful is birth again and again. But now, maker of the tabernacle, thou hast been seen; thou shalt not make up this tabernacle again.

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My Friend Flicker

Always I am intrigued by Irwin Edman's "Under Whatever Sky" columns. Their brilliant sallies, original slants, subtle irony and disarming sarcasm evoke unfeigned delight. Occasionally, however, I feel a twinge of dissatisfaction because he does not go far enough. It is like being invited to go for a walk toward a greatly desired objective, only to find oneself unexpectedly deserted and alone, short of the objective.

In the Summer issue of THE AMERICAN SCHOLAR, page 364, the writer pays due respects to his "friend Flicker," who is "so fair to all sides" he "cannot come to any conclusion," hence is utterly unable to steer a proper course between "classic" and "unintelligible" modern poetry. When the writer answers friend Flicker's eager query, "Shall I give up classic poetry or modern poetry, or the critics?" with an unhesitatingly frank "Give up the critics," I shout a hearty AMEN! But disappointment bobs up when the writer allows his "friend Flicker" to depart contentedly with volumes of Milton and Dylan Thomas bracketed under his arm. That Dr. Edman aims a lethal thrust at the modern critic who would overturn heaven and earth in order to justify the unintelligibility palmed off as poetry appears unmistakable; but in permitting "friend Flicker" to walk away with Milton unequally yoked with Thomas are we to understand that he puts his imprimatur on the Freudian stuff that Dylan Thomas secretes, and, taking this as a "symptom" (see his piece on the preceding page of the Summer issue entitled "The Autobiography of a Symptom"), lends tacit approval to much of the effusive gibberish sponsored by Cummings, Auden, Winters, Spender, et al.? This is hard to believe—and it is still harder to believe that, like friend Flicker, he cannot make up his mind about the welter of modernistic unintelligibility masquerading under the aegis of poetry.

During the past week I have been reading Cummings' Χαῖρε, which, as every student of Greek knows, means "Rejoice." However, in place of rejoicing, I felt scorn and disgust that a man of fine talent should insult the American public by flinging in its face, along with genuinely poetic lines, a dozen or more pages of utterly meaningless drivel implicitly labeled *poetry*. Make no mistake about it—the modernists are on the loose, still rampaging. With high hauteur and sneering scorn for the bourgeois lover

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of poetry that has beauty and meaning undisguised, they toss at us pages of Freudian ravings, mystic mushiness, delirious twaddle, deranged flummery. Does Dr. Edman consider the situation so hopeless that, like a fever, it must be allowed to run its course, and so forbears to attack the phalanxed clan of mystifiers who with tongue in cheek dole out to a gullible public their silly, because unintelligible, wares? I hold no sacrosanct brief for classicism in art, certain as I am that many modernists have rendered very valuable service by forcing a too complacent public to re-examine its standards. For such service I am truly grateful. But to the poets who, for sake of filthy lucre or cheap notoriety, persist in foisting on us as *poetry* what is neither lovely nor intelligible nor exhilaratingly new in thought, I believe Dr. Edman and all self-respecting editors should unite in turning thumbs down—and with a vengeance!

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Return to Europe

I wish to comment on Martin Gumpert's moving report "Return to Europe." It proves how much a person who has left his native country changes in a period of thirteen years—more, even how much Germany has changed during that time. (As an expert in geriatrics, Dr. Gumpert has undoubtedly noticed that his German friends have aged not thirteen but twenty-six years.) All of us who were born and lived most of our lives in Germany, and who returned after the war, have gone through feelings similar to those that Dr. Gumpert so eloquently describes, although few, if any, have given them equally adequate expression.

I returned to Germany in June, 1945, shortly after the cessation of hostilities, and stayed there as a member of our Military Government for three years. Although living conditions were much worse before the currency reform than they are now (I was in Berlin during the first winter, 1945-46), among the many contacts I had with the Germans I did not find the almost exclusively negative attitude which Dr. Gumpert reports. This may have been coincidental. It may also have been due to my own approach. When the Germans referred to what the Americans had done to Dresden (cf. p. 322, Summer, 1950), I did not ask: "What have they done?" I knew that the senseless destruction of Dresden in two successive air raids, which resulted in the annihilation of one of the most beautiful Baroque cities of Europe, and in the killing of scores of thousands of helpless civilians herded together in a public garden, was one of the darkest examples of air warfare, which seems to be inevitable and which many Americans deeply deplore. To that, the statement that the Nazis have killed millions of their own citizens is no appropriate answer.

Doubtless there is much hatred, greed and pettiness in Germany today. It could not be otherwise in a country in which living conditions are as overcrowded as Dr. Gumpert describes. Naturally, there is resentment of the occupation, particularly of its conspicuous negative aspects. (Incidentally, French occupation prior to the unification of Western Germany was worse than Dr. Gumpert seems to know. The French pursued in their zone a policy of starvation until they were forced to abandon it.) There is also a tremendous amount of energy, of a will to rebuild and to start a new life—not only in Berlin, where Dr. Gumpert felt at home. There is even love and brotherliness if one takes the trouble to look for it.

I am inclined to believe that, if Dr. Gumpert—or I, for that matter—had stayed in Germany and had survived, we would feel and react in much the same fashion the average German intellectual does today.

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The Chances of Communism in China

The article by Mr. Harry E. Klepetar on "The Chances of Communism in China," in the Summer issue of THE AMERICAN

(Continued on page 122)

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. . . . . Under Whatever Sky . . . . . .

IRWIN EDMAN

The War, with Inflections

The commentators lost their following in the five years of uneasy peace; they are regaining it now that war and rumors of greater wars are back with us. In a large city one is not dependent on radio. But cut off during the summer from daily newspapers, on a remote ranch in Wyoming, I found myself listening to them again. The best were as good as ever, the worst even worse. And, with radio reception erratic in a mountain area, one settled for what one could get, when one could get it.

Radio commentators are an excellent lesson in how much of language depends on inflection, how delicate is the line between fact and opinion. How quickly one learns to trust the dry, succinct Indiana speech of Elmer Davis; how promptly to note the quiet distinction he makes between his opinion and the facts he is reporting, sometimes by the faintest modulation, or by the parenthesis of half a sentence. How quickly revolted one becomes by those who use a war and men dying in it for their own political hobbies of hate or for their own bland patrioteering—verbal warriors safe in the quiet and security of a radio studio.

Doubtless television reveals even more by the expression of the face of the commentator. Insincerity is even harder to conceal from the eye than from the ear. But the voice alone is enough. Smugness comes unmistakably over the air waves, and how rapidly, too, one senses the cheapness of personalities who with whipped up cheerfulness or melodrama serve each day's grist of anxiety and horror. It is, doubtless, possible to be as vulgar in print as by word of mouth, as exhibitionistic and as insincere. Some of the leading political columnists seem to prove this. But the blandness, the smugness, the transparent homefront heroics, the mouthing into condescending clichés of even the deepest principles of democratic faith, all these sound worse by voice than they look on the printed page. A sneer at our enemies, self-congratulation—all this brings out the worst in the way of war neuroses. There is spiritual as well as material profiteering that goes on in wartime. What a comfort it is to find, once in a while, the inflections of integrity, of modesty, of responsibility, of truth. One recognizes these virtues in an inflection; one knows them almost without the words. Sometimes a voice speaks that sounds as if it were truth itself that were doing the talking—truth, quiet and clear, speaking with authority.

The Fairly Good Listener

Occasionally one hears it said of someone or other that he's a very good listener, occasionally even that she is. The picture springs to one's mind of a rapt figure, all radiant attention, listening (perhaps to oneself) as if a revelation from Heaven were being given. Long experience of talking and listening affords, perhaps, a different view of the matter.

The art of good listening is, one suspects, a highly histrionic business. The important thing in acquiring a reputation for having so cherished a social asset is to look the part. It is possible to achieve the mask of flatteringly intent concentration on what someone else is saying. The mind is, of course, free to wander elsewhere. The little trick of murmuring occasionally a "Yes, indeed!" . . . "But no!" or even that dreary expression used by chronological or permanent teen-agers, "You are so right." There is a legend that a famous mathematician, widely known as a good listener, worked out a knotty point in the theory of functions while politely listening to a lady give an account of her travels in Portugal. There are certain social virtuosi who manage,

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while they are talking themselves, to hear what is being said all over the room. One famous male gossip remained a mystery to his friends. One could scarcely get a word in edgewise when one met him. But clearly he must sometimes have listened, for he was full of knowledge by hearsay of rumors that had never yet been seen in print.

Some people with the best will in the world cannot be good listeners. They really *do* listen hard for as long as they are able—which is a very brief period. Sometimes if the bore one is listening to is a resounding bore, one is driven to start, and to keep, talking not because one wants to say anything, or because one has the slightest interest in what one is saying. One talks in a private filibuster only in self-defense, only not to hear that fearful voice begin again, not to listen again to tales of boring controversy, of outlandish theory, of cliché philosophy, of big game shooting in Kenya, of hands once held in bridge, of scores made in golf, of meals eaten in Venice, of glib analyses of Korea and Formosa and Greece. At times the bore whom one has by sheer momentum quenched seems in his (or her) turn to be listening with passionate absorption. Or is it with glazed eyes? A new attack is being planned, one well knows, behind that mask of polite attention. Soon the barrage of soliloquy will begin again. Just keep talking, one says to oneself. This is, of course, no way to get a reputation for being a good listener. But the chances are even that in this quite accidental fashion one may get to be known as a wonderful conversationalist.

One Can't Go There Again

There is a melancholy pleasure in returning to the same place at least two summers in succession, especially a place in which one last year had become part of a small and agreeable community. There is always a touch of sadness about such a return, the shadow that at once darkens and deepens one's enjoyment. One looks for the same *time*-marks and they are still there, not only a stable landmark like a towering mountain, or cliff, or cape, but the light at just this angle on an August afternoon, with its fading gold tinctured with thoughts of autumn and the dying year. One notes, on the other hand, conspicuous absence; people have died or simply stayed away. And one misses the person one was oneself last year, and the world one had known a year ago, so talkative about possible war, so unbelieving of it.

The children of some of one's friends have grown a year older, too. The twelve year old girl has become thirteen, and suddenly the young woman she is to be is imminent in her manners and her looks. The boy one had known only a year ago as a child has this year begun to talk of college, or the army. The sense of mortality and change assails one, especially about the young. It is not only that the young in our time (even the girls) have as good a chance of dying as the old, and conveniently at home, too, in their own houses, on familiar streets. Something less world-wide and non-political enforces the sense of transformation as an older person looks at his juniors. How many children has one seen change from children to adults! One ought to be accustomed to it by now, and one surely could not want children to stay childish forever. The thought, even, is a horrid blend of monstrosity and sentimentalism. One does not wish the caterpillar to stay a caterpillar, nor the possible frog a mere tadpole. One is sometimes, to speak bluntly, relieved to think forward to the time when the squalling child will be an adolescent, to the period when the adolescent will be a man. But these children one had known have died as surely as if they had perished. The adults one suddenly knows are different persons, possibly totally different. Oneself will be to these recently hatched adults a memory of childhood. There will, of course, be other children that come into view, but they will be strangers, too; and they, in time, if one lives long enough to see them grow up, will be strangers once more—different ones.

Perhaps it is wiser to go to a new place, to see it only once, to have it be a frozen instant of memory, to be a possession as long as one lives. Nothing will change a recollection; what is recalled will be con-

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sonant with that now remote moment of happiness. It is, perhaps, lucky for the travel agencies that this is so. One must get away from here; one cannot go back there.

Not for an Age?

It was a little picnic on an August mountainside overlooking a valley in the Grand Tetons. Somebody had thought to bring along a volume of poetry, quaintly Tennyson, and the small group were by happy chance in the mood to hear poetry read aloud. The reader, himself a poet, read some of the early works, "Oriana," "Lady Clara Vere de Vere," "Airy, Fairy Lillian." We smiled condescendingly. How we had outgrown all that! How quaint was Victorian feeling and Victorian fashion! And even in some of the better, indeed the best, of Tennyson, was there not pseudo-Grecian feeling corrupting the classic Greek flavor? Did not Lucretius sound as if he were in London, a member of the Metaphysical Society? Was there not a touch of Sir Richard Burton in Ulysses?

Later in the day, thinking back to this episode, I began to wonder how much of the feeling that now, when expressed, seems so genuine and so independent of our era is nonetheless, as will be seen shortly, say in fifty years, a quaintness, an oddity. But one insists to oneself, "There is nothing chronologically provincial about me. I see around everything purely contemporary. I am a spectator, like Plato, of all time and all existence. Knowing about culture patterns, I have freed myself from them. Have I not learned, too, from Freud and the anthropologists not to take my prejudices or my society too absolutely? Have I not read the semanticists and freed myself from temporary connotations? Could anyone be better equipped than we are to free ourselves from the conventions which bound earlier generations? Have we not seen around Marx and around liberalism and around Newton, even?"

Suddenly one hears the low voice of posterity: "How alike they all sound, the whole kit and caboodle of them in the 1950's, with their culture patterns, their complexes, their fright of the new atomic age. How sure they were that civilization was at an end; how filled they were with despair, of man and all his works, including atomic fission." The voice sinks to a faint whisper: "There were one or two original minds, but nobody paid any attention to them." The voice trailed off almost into silence. For the life of me I could not make out what the names were. The voice repeated them, but, since I had never heard them before, they meant nothing to me, and I forgot them at once. But I was somehow certain they were neither Russian nor American, and the voice almost inaudibly murmured the slogan of a philosophy which I had never heard mentioned, even by the *avant-garde*. It was shocking to be told, almost in so many words, that we are not for (or of) all time, but for an age only, our age—perhaps, as some believe, almost over.

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Faith and Despair: The Alcotts and Mark Twain

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Louisa May Alcott, by Madeleine B. Stern. Norman, Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press. 1950. 424 pp. $5.00.
Marmee, The Mother of Little Women, by Sandford Salyer. Norman, Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press. 1949. 209 pp. $3.00.
Mark Twain as a Literary Artist, by Gladys Carmen Bellamy. Norman, Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press. 1950. 396 pp. $5.00.

So far as literary scholarship is concerned, most of the Alcotts—Abigail (the beloved "Abba" and "Marmee"), Abby May and Louisa—have been moldering undisturbed in their graves for half a century. Leona Rostenberg's monograph (1943) on the anonymous and pseudonymous thrillers of the estimable Louisa May can scarcely be called a disturbance, since the author of *Little Women* never took those blood-curdlers seriously enough to sign her name to them, and forgot them as soon as they had answered the purpose of providing her with quickly needed money.

Bronson Alcott is a notable exception. And matter-of-factly it might be said that he has never quite died. "Educationists" have helped keep him alive, for his famous Temple School in some respects was a century fore-timed, and modern education theorists are just catching up with him. Pieces of Bronson Alcott's writings—out of *Tablets* or out of *Conversations on the Gospels*—can still be found in an occasional college-level anthology. Emerson scholarship, too—and, indeed, what might be called Concord scholarship—has played its part in sustaining a life that might never have expired in any case. It is perhaps unfair to say that Bronson Alcott will live so long as Emerson, Thoreau and Hawthorne, but these are of the long-lived and illustrious company he kept. Then in 1937, the late Professor Odell Shepard brought out *Pedlar's Progress*, the biography, and followed it with *The Journals* in 1938.

But none of the Alcotts has been dead to the memorialists. Posthumous diaries, memoirs, recollections, letters and "little lives" turn up now and again, as they have turned up since 1888—the very latest, I believe, being *The Wayside, Home of Authors*, by Margaret M. Lothrop, in 1940. These homely, chatty memorabilia have always seemed to me quite fitting to the Alcotts, to the way they lived, to what they were, to the spirit of them and of Concord. They seemed fitting, too, as comments on the books that Louisa May Alcott wrote. For certainly the author of *Little Women*, *Little Men*, *Under the Lilacs*, *Lulu's Library* I, II, III, and *A Garland for Girls* did nothing if she did not write out of her family life and Concord life (i.e., New England village life), and the spirit that directed them both. One is tempted to use the term "Americana," but there has been condescension in it since a snickering department of H. L. Mencken's *American Mercury* bore it as a name.

Nevertheless—Americana. For certainly after reading Madeleine B. Stern's biography, no one can value these authentic "ana" at less than their true worth, or condescend to Louisa May Alcott. Painstaking research went into Miss Stern's book. That, about a book by the author of *The Life of Margaret Fuller*, should go without saying. But there was something more than research. There was judgment. There was perhaps

✪ SAUNDERS REDDING is professor of English at Hampton Institute. His latest book, *They Came in Chains*, was published in 1950. Other books by Mr. Redding include *To Make a Poet Black*, *No Day of Triumph* and *Stranger and Alone*, a novel. His articles have appeared before in THE AMERICAN SCHOLAR.

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an unliterary but wholly right discrimination of values and relations that gave to Louisa May Alcott's writing exactly the significance that it deserves. In the way of *literature*, the deserts are not large. And what Miss Stern saw, and what she makes emphatically clear, is that the greater significance of Louisa Alcott is the life and spirit out of which her writing grew. Not life and spirit in the abstract, but in concrete items like the transcendental Consociate Family, which failed as Emerson predicted, and Thoreau's school, which Louisa attended for a while, and the grinding poverty, and the family love and the New England conscience that made poverty not only bearable but somehow almost a blessing.

The details are often painful. There is Bronson Alcott losing his school in Boston partly because Harriet Martineau sniffed at it, partly because he admitted a Negro girl, and partly because he published his *Conversations with Children on the Gospels*. There followed the resolve never to teach again, and the unfortunate meeting with that strange man, Charles Lane, who devised the heart-rending experiment in transcendental living at Fruitlands. It would have resulted in the dissolution of the Alcott family—but for "Abba," who would not let Bronson go off with Lane to join the Shakers. Then the removal to another house, and another—"Twenty-two," Abba said, "in twenty-four years"—and the death of Lizzie (who of course is Beth in *Little Women*) in one of them. For years all the world lay between Boston and Concord. It was the American world of Jacksonian democracy, of the slavery controversy, of transcendentalism, of social reform, and of the family. The Alcotts knew no Jacksonian democrats, for even Thoreau was not one; but once they helped a slave into Canada, and they knew Harriet Tubman, and Bronson helped found the Preliminary Anti-Slavery Society. The greatest transcendentalists and liberals (Emerson, Channing, Garrison, Phillips) were their friends. And, above all, they had their family.

The world grew larger, but its philosophic and sociological elements did not

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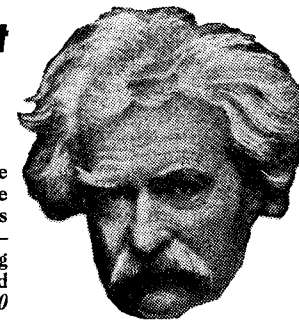

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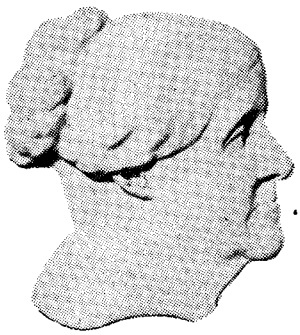

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change when literary success finally came to Louisa. Quite frankly, she wrote for money, and she began making it in quantity after the publication of *Little Women* in 1868. Then she and May could go abroad, and Anna could again set up a home for her now fatherless boys, and Father Bronson could travel West for his lectures (he called them "conversations") in style, "with a brand-new trunk and gloves and cambric shirts assured of an audience, if not for the American Plato at least for the Father of Little Women." And Mother Alcott could at last sit "in her pleasant room without work or care."

That Marmee had not always done this is really the substance of Sandford Salyer's *Marmee, The Mother of Little Women.* While not so thorough a job as Miss Stern's biography, it helps by animating the Alcott background of people with whom Miss Stern deals but sketchily. It is background in considerable depth, for here are the first Mays (Marmee's paternal line), the first Quincys (her maternal line), the Hancocks, and that Chief Justice Sewall (great-grandfather) who had condemned the Salem witches and who afterwards, in deep remorse, stood once a year with bowed head in Old South Meeting House while the assembly prayed for his forgiveness.

Marmee, too, since it is her book, comes to colorful life. A woman of spirited morality—indeed, the embodiment of New England rectitude—she could yet sing a silly song and make a playful joke. "My husband," she wrote to her brother Samuel May, "is the perfect personification of modesty and moderation. I am not sure that we shall not blush into obscurity and contemplate into starvation."

And "contemplate into starvation" they might have, too, but for Marmee herself. For (and this runs counter to what seems Mr. Salyer's estimation) Bronson Alcott, a strong transcendentalist, was a weak man. One makes the assertion in the full knowledge that the practical strength which Bronson lacked is considered in some circles unmeet for the teacher-philosopher. But philosophy should be no bar to action, and Emerson himself, Bronson Alcott's master,

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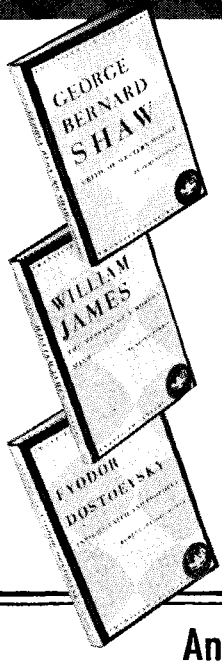

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railed against the impractical scholar and against those who would keep him so. He did it in "The American Scholar," and he did it more specifically when the Consociate Family was started. "The fault of Alcott's community is that it has only room for one. . . . Alcott and Lane are always feeling of their shoulders to find if their wings are sprouting; but next best to wings are cowhide boots, which Society is always advising them to put on." Yet Emerson had sympathy for Bronson. It was Emerson who, when the Alcott fortunes were lowest, started the Alcott Subscription, a kind of community chest. Marmee Alcott was not too proud to accept of its funds.

Later she took a job as visitor to Boston's poor. She saw the irony in it. She was forty-eight then, and she kept the job for eight years. She seemed inexhaustible both of energy and mind. She kept up with things. She did not suffer by comparison in conversation with Emerson, Bronson, Thoreau, Lydia Maria Child and the formidable Margaret Fuller. She stood for woman suffrage, radical reconstruction, and equal education for women.

What runs through both these books is the tide of life that washed into the New England American mind some of its most cherished ideals—the equality of man, the inviolability of justice, freedom of franchise, the integrity and sanctity of the individual. Scholarship quite aside, both books are interesting and valuable as Americana.

Quite different from them is Gladys Carmen Bellamy's *Mark Twain as a Literary Artist*. There is more of the detachment of the scholar and visibly more of the apparatus of scholarship here. And this is possibly because Miss Bellamy felt that after Van Wyck Brooks's *The Ordeal of Mark Twain* and Bernard DeVoto's three volumes, yet another study of Twain could be justified on only very apparent and substantial grounds.

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and that he was arrested in his moral and aesthetic development." Secondly, she does not agree with Mr. DeVoto's contrary but equally sweeping opinion that Twain, "with all his faults [hit-and-miss composition, disharmony, lack of discrimination and lack of structure] fulfilled himself as a writer." And finally, and most important, she does not agree with the critics' general indictment that Mark Twain "never analyzed any effect beyond its mere grammar" or "that he was only the improvisator, the careless writer, unconcerned and working by impulse."

It is at this point, I think, that Miss Bellamy's study falters. The proof she adduces as to Twain's *conscious* artistry (a redundancy) in writing is not always quite valid. One item of this proof, the essay "What Paul Bourget Thinks of Us," has more to do with the writer's purpose and materials than with his methods and technique. Other items of proof—say, his concern for indicating with penciled symbols every shade of emphasis and every tonal value in a Browning poem—seem rather to substantiate Wagenknecht's contention that Twain was a "talker" rather than a writer. Certainly the West, where Twain's talent came to first flower, was conducive to talk, and the oral tall tale was the broad base of his humor. In Western towns and in other places local notoriety came to him for his proficiency in swearing. Miss Bellamy does make a case for Twain's "careful attention to word selection and sentence structure," but it is a case outside the demands of her subject. And finally she herself says that "because of his failure to achieve detachment from the pettinesses with which life afflicts all men, Mark Twain was frequently unable to carry through the process of selection, simplification and abstraction from the raw material of life—a process somehow required for the production of art."

This is Miss Bellamy's main thesis, and she expounds it sometimes brilliantly. What she finds accountable for Twain's artistic failure is something quite different from what Brooks and DeVoto found. Moreover, she rejects—and rightly, I think—the once standard opinion that Twain was "im-

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prisoned in his boyhood." What blocked Twain as artist were two pairs of opposing attitudes: moralism vs. determinism; pessimism vs. "patheticism." Thus there was a "violent mental conflict, a logical dilemma, which forced much of his work into distorted patterns of both thought and action."

It is from this premise that she analyzes Twain's work—his humorous sketches, his travel books, his reminiscences and his fiction. Perhaps the analysis is too long; and it is certainly true that it is an analysis of attitudes rather than artistry. Only three of the twenty chapters deal specifically with Twain's artistry.

But it is with the premise that I wish to argue. What that premise amounts to, at least by implication, is that Mark Twain neither as artist *nor* as person (Miss Bellamy makes the distinction time and again, and therefore I may be excused) knew where he was going or what comment he wanted to make on life. But it seems to me that his major books, and particularly his travel books, which are the most personal, make one consistent comment, and make it over and over again. Sometimes Twain puts it in the mouth of a Huck Finn or a Nigger Jim; sometimes it drops tersely from the lips of Pudd'nhead Wilson; sometimes, as in *Following the Equator*, Twain says it in his own person: "The joy of killing! the joy of seeing killing done—these are the traits of the human race at large. We White people are merely modified Thugs; Thugs fretting under the restraint of a not very thick skin of civilization."

Twain was a profound pessimist who used his gift of humor to lash the world into a semblance of what he uncertainly hoped it could be.

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(Continued from page 108)

SCHOLAR, contains a number of overstatements and errors of fact which should not pass unnoticed.

It is a gross overstatement to say, "Until the Communist conquest, the land was exclusively in the possession of big landowners, who treated their tenants like serfs." There was undue landlordism in the Yangtze Valley, but in many other parts of China, especially in the Yellow River Valley, small holdings have been the rule. Careful studies by Lossing Buck and others show that for China as a whole this problem is not greater than for some highly-developed countries in the West.

The use of such terms as "feudal" and "serfs" in reference to China is odd if at the same time we are to agree with the author's reiterated assertion that the Chinese are "rugged individualists." Is it likely that rugged individualists would play the role of good "serfs"? Feudalism as we know it in the West has very little meaning when applied to an ancient and highly sophisticated civilization like China. A really feudalistic society would not have carried on for fifteen centuries before 1905 a civil-service examination system open to all males without class distinctions.

The "problem of face saving" is in no way elucidated by characterizing it as "the incredible touchiness of the Chinese." Face is a universal device for maintaining a person's self-respect; everyone employs it, and it looks like touchiness only to one who does not take the trouble to understand it when he sees it in another culture.

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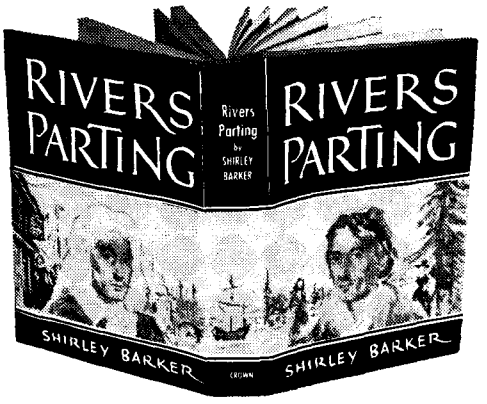

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shadow of a Kommissar." Such an atmosphere still exists in the United States. When men "engaged in intellectual pursuits" have formulated their doctrines, they may find a sponsor, or disseminate their views at their own expense. We will echo Voltaire in protecting this freedom.

Upon entering the field of education, however, one assumes a responsibility to the public, and if he wishes to teach conclusions at variance with principles the public wishes to retain, it will not sponsor him. A private institution may merely refuse a new contract, but state institutions with tenure must find other means, and the University of California has decided upon a loyalty oath.

A free public will not deny freedom of thought, but will insist that its children be educated in the principles for which it stands. Our free public believes that communism is inimical to its principles, and that Communists will not present those principles fairly.

The student does not enter the classroom equipped to combat the ideas presented to him; he comes to learn something new to him. He places utter confidence in his instructor, and if that instructor instills a foreign ideology without naming it (the method of which the public believes the Communist guilty), the student usually has no basis for rejecting it. (It is a melancholy fact that a large scholarship fund goes begging because it requires that the recipient attend a college where American history is a required subject.) The classroom is not a debating session at which two instructors argue disputed points; the student must absorb the teaching sufficiently to pass examinations given by the instructor, and correcting misinformation is harder than learning what is right at first. These are some of the reasons why the public demands that its children receive their education from personnel who do not hold views at variance with American principles, i.e., Communists and Communist-sympathizers. "The waters must always be what are the fountains from which they flow."

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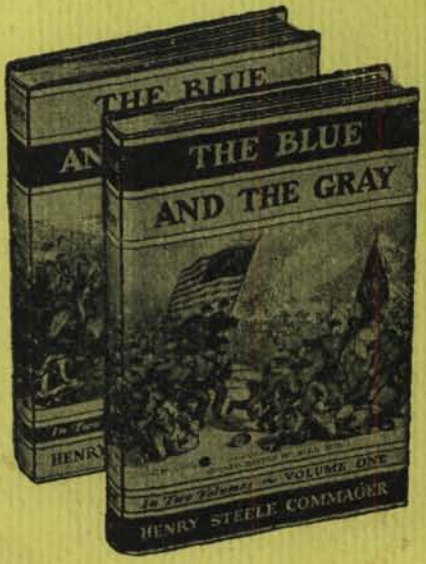

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